

**JEWISH
TALES AND LEGENDS**

JEWISH TALES AND LEGENDS

ספורים ואגדות

מהתלמוד והמדרש

*Supplementary Readings
to the Torah*

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED BY
MENDEL G. GLENN



HEBREW PUBLISHING CO.

77-79 Delancey Street, N. Y.

JEWISH
TALES AND LEGENDS

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TO THE BLESSED MEMORY
OF MY FATHER
MOSES EZEKIEL GLEMBOTZKY
WHO FIRST INTRODUCED ME
TO JEWISH LORE

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In making this collection of tales and legends from the Talmud and Midrash, my object is to place in the hands of youthful students and laymen a book of ancient Jewish lore—chronologically arranged and translated into the modern. I have used only those stories that have a *tale to tell*.

I selected legends and tales that deal with Pentateuchal figures and heroes only. Where the story in the Pentateuch is sufficient for its *tale value*, I preferred it to the Midrash (e. g. "Destruction of Sodom and 'Amorah"; "Wooing of Rebekah"; "Blessing of Jacob," etc.). I also used many of the tales in the Sepher Hayashar, which have not been employed very much in books of this nature. The rendition, though modern in its English (even as to the exclusion of thou's, thee's), still retains the Biblical flavor and atmosphere so necessary for a more complete understanding and enjoyment.

I venture to hope that this book will serve as a good introductory handbook for advanced students in Hebrew Schools to the treasures and wealth of the original Hebrew tales of the Talmud and Midrash; it may also be used as a supplementary reader to the Pentateuch.

I, hereby, want to acknowledge my indebtedness and gratitude to my friends, C. N. Finkel, M.A., Registrar of the Newark Preparatory School, of Newark, N. J., for reading and revising the manuscript, and to Dr. Pincus Schub, of Gratz College, Philadelphia, Pa., for many helpful suggestions.

M. G. G.

Brooklyn, N. Y.
1929.

The material used in this volume is based upon original and secondary sources.

The Pentateuch

Targumin (Onkelos, Jehonathan, and Jerushalmi)

Commentary of Rashi to the Pentateuch, and as well as other Commentaries

Midrashim (Rabbah, Tanhumah, etc.)

Talmud

Zohar

Yalkutim (Shimeoni; Reubeni)

Sepher Hayashar

Sepher Ha-aggadah, by Ch. N. Bialik and J. Ch. Ravnitzky.

Kol Aggadoth Israel, by I. B. Lewner.

Legends of the Jews, by L. Ginzberg.

JEWISH TALES AND LEGENDS

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CHAPTER I

ADAM AND EVE

1. *The Creation of Man*

AFTER God had created the world in six days, He resolved to create Man, so that he should find the whole world ready for him. God may be likened to that noble host who first prepares his house, sets all things in order and then invites guests. If man dare to be proud of his superior intelligence over other creatures, it may be said to him: "An insect was created before you" . . . God created only one man in order that one race should not claim superiority over another, that all should come from the same origin.

On the sixth day of the creation, as God sat on His Throne of Glory with all the angels surrounding Him, He took counsel with them as to the creation of man. God said:

"Let us make a man in our image and in our likeness. He shall rule over the world."

However, all the angels did not share the same opinion. The Angel of Loving-kindness said:

"O Lord, do create the Man who will do kind deeds in the world."

But the Angel of Peace appeared before the Eternal and said:

"O God, do not create Man: he will be full of enmity and quarrelsomeness."

And the Angel of Justice approached the Lord and said:

"O God I am of the opinion that Man should be created; he will surely practise righteousness and justice . . ."

Then came the Angel of Truth and said:

"Nay, but Man will tell lies . . ."

At this, God cast the Angel of Truth down from heaven to earth as a punishment. The other angels wondered why the Angel of Truth was so severely punished, but God said:

"Truth will spring back out of the earth."

Now God summoned the company of angels that were under Archangel Michael and Archangel Gabriel, and these answered with disdain:

"What is Man that Thou art mindful of him? What is the son of Man that Thou visitest him?"

God, thereupon, stretched forth his little finger and all of them, with the exception of their chiefs, were consumed by fire.

While the angels were arguing as to the advisability or inadvisability to create Man, God took dust from the four corners of the earth, and formed

Man out of it. He then blew in his nostrils a living soul. And like all the creatures formed in the "six days of creation," Adam came out from the hands of the Creator fully developed, and he was like a man of twenty years of age. He was of gigantic figure and of extraordinary bodily beauty.

When Adam saw the beautiful world for the first time, he marveled and praised the Creator, saying:

"How great are Thy works, O Lord!"

However, the admiration that all creatures conceived for Adam surpassed his admiration for the world. They took him for their creator. Even some of the angels were of the same opinion. . . .

The wisdom of the man showed itself when he gave names to the animals. For some of the angels were still dissatisfied with Man, and God pointed out to them that he surpassed them in wisdom. God asked them to give names to the animals, and because they failed to do so God asked Man who he was able to do it. All animals passed before Man and he named them all: This one, he named lion, that one, the ox, the next one, the horse, and so on. Then God asked him what was his own name to be, and he said *Adam*, since he had been created from *Adamah* (earth). Then God asked him:

"And what is My name?" And Adam answered:

"*Adonai*, for Thou art the Lord over all creatures."

When Adam made an end of naming all animals he said to God:

"My Lord! All the animals that you made pass before me came in pairs, but I am alone."

And God decided to create a helpmate for Adam.

He caused a heavy sleep to descend upon Adam and while he slept God took one of his ribs and formed Woman out of it. When Adam awoke from his profound sleep and saw Woman before him in all her surprising beauty and grace, he exclaimed:

"May God bless you, my wife! You will be called *Ishah* (woman) since you were taken from *Ish* (Man). And he named her Havah (Eve) meaning "She would be the mother of all living."

The Garden of Eden was the abode of the first man and woman. In this Garden (known also as Paradise) stood the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. And God put the following injunction on Adam:

"Do not eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge."

2. *The First Sin*

The serpent was the most distinguished among animals. He alone had qualities which resembled

those of man. Like man he stood upright upon two feet, and in height he was equal to a camel. Had it not been for the fall of man, which brought misfortune for serpents also, one pair of serpents would have sufficed to perform the work man has to do. It was due to the superintelligence of this creature that both he and the man were led to their ruin.

The serpent knew but too well the character of the man to try to persuade him to disobey God's commandment, so he approached the woman, knowing that women are more easily persuaded. Accordingly, he planned a very cunning conversation in which Eve could easily be trapped.

"Is it true that God has said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?' " asked the serpent.

Eve replied: "We may eat of the fruit of all the trees in the garden, except that which is in the midst of the garden. That one we may not even touch, lest we be stricken with death."

The serpent, thereupon, knowing full well that God had forbidden only the eating, and not the touching, pushed Eve against the tree. He then triumphantly said to the woman:

"You see, touching the tree did not cause you death. Eating of the fruit thereof will hurt you just as little. Do you want to know the reason why God forbade Adam and you to eat of the delicious fruit of the tree?"

"Ah, if I could only know that!" sighed the woman.

And whisperingly, the cunning serpent continued his talk:

"It is jealousy and fear! God fears your eating of that forbidden fruit. He Himself ate first of the fruit of the tree and then created the world. God knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you shall be as God. Furthermore, have you not observed that every creature was given dominion over those previously made. You were created last in order to rule over all things. Hurry now and eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden lest He bring forth **still** others to rule over you."

To emphasize his words the serpent began to shake the tree violently and bring down its fruit. He ate thereof saying:

"As I do not die of eating the fruit, so will you not die either."

Eve deliberated and decided that her master was telling her a lie, and so determined to follow the advice of the serpent. Yet she could not bring herself to disobey the command of God immediately. She then committed the sin little by little. First, she ate only the skin of the fruit, and when she saw that death did not strike her, she ate ravenously of the fruit itself. Immediately she saw the Angel of Death standing before her. "Woe

to me!" Eve lamented, "now I shall surely die and God will create another wife for Adam."

It was then that Eve resolved to tempt also her master with the forbidden fruit. It required tears, and pleading on her part to persuade Adam to disregard God's commandment. She did not stop at that. Her envy made her give of the fruit, to all other living beings that they, too, might share the same fate. All ate, and all animals, then, became like man, mortal; but one bird, Hol (phenix) refused the fruit. That bird was steadfast and its reward was immortality, for neither Hol nor its descendants tasted death.

The first result of this transgression was that Adam and Eve became aware that they were naked. Adam tried to gather leaves from the trees with which to cover themselves, but he heard one tree after another say: "There is the transgressor who deceived God! Begone, and take no leaves from me!" Only the fig tree gave them permission to take of its leaves, for it was the fig that they were forbidden to eat.

3. *Death of Adam*

When Adam's last day on Earth came, Eve said to him: "Why should I go on living when you will be no more? How long shall I have to linger after your death? Do tell me!" Adam answered her that it would not take long—They would die

together and be buried in the same place. He commanded her not to touch his dead body, until an angel from God arranged for its burial and that she was to begin at once to pray to God, until his soul left his body.

While Eve was praying, an angel came and asked her to rise. "Eve, arise from your prayer. See, your husband has left his mortal troubles, arise and see his spirit go to his Creator."

And, lo, she beheld a chariot of light, drawn by four shining angels, and preceded by angels. In this chariot lay the soul of Adam, which the angels were taking to heaven. When they arrived there they burned incense until the clouds of smoke enveloped the heavens.

Then they prayed to God to have mercy upon Adam who was made in His image. An angel sounded a trumpet and the rest cried out with awesome voices:

"Blessed be the glory of the Lord by His creatures, for He has shown mercy unto Adam, the work of His hands!"

One of the seraphim seized Adam and carried him off to a stream of fire, washed him three times and brought him before the presence of God, who sat upon his throne, and stretching out His hand, lifted Adam up and gave him over to the Archangel Michael, saying: "Raise him to the Paradise of the third heaven, and there you shall leave him

until the great and fearful day ordained by Me, comes."

Michael now prayed to God to let him attend to the burial preparations of Adam. This was granted Michael, who, accompanied by a host of angels, went down to earth. When they arrived at the earthly Paradise, all the trees blossomed forth and the fragrance that came out of them lulled all men into slumber.

Thereupon, at the bidding of God, the great archangels, Michael, Raphael and Gabriel, covered the body of Adam with linen, and poured sweet-smelling oil upon it. Then, they buried him on the spot whence God had taken the dust wherewith to make Adam.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN WHO NEVER DIED

IT came to pass after many years that God became greatly incensed against the people, for everyone did that which seemed good in his own eyes, and everyone angered God greatly by his evil deeds. Enoch, the son of Jared, saw the wrong doing of his contemporaries and decided to leave them. Accordingly he separated himself from them and built for himself a house in utter seclusion. There he lived, and therein did he pour out his heart to God in prayer that he should have mercy upon all his people and show them the right path and the way of justice.

Once, as Enoch was praying fervently, he heard an angel's voice calling unto him: "Enoch, Enoch!" "Here I am," answered the pious recluse. The voice of the angel continued: "Enoch, Enoch, thus spoke the Lord God: 'Make yourself ready and leave the house and the secret place wherein you have kept yourself hidden, go out to the people and teach them the ways in which they shall walk and the deeds which they shall do, in order that they may walk in the ways of God.'"

Enoch, thereupon, left his retreat and went to the people and taught them righteousness, justice and conduct pleasing to God. He also sent messengers all over to proclaim: "All who desire to hear the word of God, let them come to Enoch." And in answer to his call there gathered unto Enoch a vast multitude of men, to hear his wisdom and to learn from him what was good and right. Even kings and princes, one hundred and thirty in number, assembled about him and submitted themselves to his rule, to be taught and guided by him, as he taught and guided all the others. Peace reigned thus over the whole world all the two hundred and forty-three years that Enoch ruled.

When Enoch saw that the people began to follow God's ways in truth, he decided to retire again from the world and devote himself entirely to the service of God. But he knew how the people had become used to him and how they would miss him, so he withdrew from them gradually. First he would disappear for three days and spend them in prayer and praise to God, and on the fourth day he would return and teach those who flocked to his door, as he was used to do. Thus many years passed. Afterwards he began to appear among them but once a week, later once a month, and finally, when they became used to his frequent disappearances, Enoch would show himself only once a year. The kings, princes, and all others

who were desirous of seeing Enoch did not dare to come close to him during the times of his retirement. For the more Enoch secluded himself, the more did his face send forth beams, so that the people were afraid to come near him or to look on his face. So they resolved to gather about Enoch only on the day that he showed himself unto them.

As Enoch went out to them, the people shouted with joy and prostrated themselves before him and cried: "Long live the King! Long live the King!" Then would Enoch instruct them in all they wished to know.

One day while Enoch was teaching the people, an angel appeared before him and said: "Enoch, Enoch, thus spoke the Lord, behold you will ascend to heaven!" Then Enoch ordered all the inhabitants of the earth to be called together in order that he might teach them before he left them. All the inhabitants of the world gathered themselves together before Enoch, and he addressed them thus: "I have been summoned to ascend to heaven, therefore I would teach you before I leave you. If you will all live in peace and harmony and love God with all your heart and all your soul, then God will love you and will multiply you and and you will become as many as the stars in the heaven."

While Enoch spoke, those gathered near him

saw a gigantic fiery steed descending from heaven, and they told him of it. Enoch then said to the people: "The steed is for me, for the time has come when I leave you never to be seen again." The steed approached Enoch, and he mounted upon its back, all the time instructing the people, commanding them to serve God and walk in his ways and love peace. Eight hundred thousand men followed a day's journey after him. But on the second day Enoch asked his followers to turn back: "Go home, lest death overtake you if you follow me farther!" Most of them obeyed his words and turned back, **but** those who loved him with all their hearts, kept on following him, saying: "Nothing but death will part us!" On the sixth day of the journey he said to those who were still accompanying him: "Go home now, for to-morrow I shall ascend to heaven, and whoever will be near me then will surely die!" So many of the followers wept and left their master. But some of the very staunch and faithful remained with Enoch, saying: "Withersoever you go we will go. Nothing but death will part us!"

On the seventh day Enoch was borne to heaven in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses. On the next day the kings who had returned in good time sent messengers to inquire into the fate of the men who would not leave Enoch and followed him to the last. They found snow and great hailstones

upon the spot from which Enoch was borne to heaven. They split open the stones and found therein the bodies of all the missing people. The body of Enoch alone was not among them; they could not find him for God had taken him into heaven.

CHAPTER III

THE FLOOD

I. *The Building of the Ark*

IT came to pass after many years that the people on earth became very wicked again, and God decided to blot out from the face of the earth all men and other creatures, for He repented having created them.

Noah alone found favor in the eyes of God.

But even in God's great anger, when the utter destruction of the sinners was decided upon, He still permitted His mercy to prevail, in that He sent Noah unto them to warn them for one hundred and twenty years to amend their ways, always reminding them of the coming disaster. But the people only ridiculed Noah.

God told Noah to begin building an ark which would be his shelter when He would send the flood unto the world. When the people saw Noah occupying himself with the making of the ark, they asked: "Why do you build this ark?" Noah answered: "God will bring a flood upon you." Then the people would laugh and say: "What sort of

flood? If he sends a fire-flood, we know how to protect ourselves for we shall anoint our bodies with the blood of the *salamander*; and if it is to be a flood of water, then if the waters bubble up from the earth, we shall cover them with iron rods; and if they descend from above, we know a remedy against that too,—we shall use sponges which will soak in all the water! . . .”

Then answered Noah:

“The waters will ooze out from under your feet and you will not be able to ward them off. For nothing is impossible for God. Repent of your evil deeds and do good, then will God repent of His resolution to destroy you. For God is merciful and He does not want the death of the sinners. He wants them to leave off their sins.”

But the people were stubborn, and they did not heed Noah’s warning, and then, when the one hundred and twenty years’ respite had expired, He brought the flood upon the earth.

2. *The Punishment of the Wicked*

The ark completed, Noah’s next task was to gather in all the animals. No less than thirty-two species of birds and three hundred species of reptiles he had to take along with him. Indeed, more animals appeared than were required to come, so God instructed Noah to sit at the door of the ark

and note which of the animals lay down as they reached the entrance of the ark and which stood. Those who lay down belonged in the ark, the others did not.

On the day when the animals entered the ark the sun was darkened, and the foundations of the earth trembled, and lightning flashed, and it thundered as never before. Thus did God give them seven more days of respite in addition to the one hundred and twenty years.

When these seven days passed too, and the people did not repent of their wrong doing, the flood broke loose. Seven hundred thousand men gathered around the ark and implored Noah to grant them protection. "Open the ark, Noah," they shouted. "Why should we die before your eyes?" Then answered Noah in a loud voice and said: "Are you not those who were rebellious towards God, saying, 'There is no God?' therefore has He brought the deluge upon you to destroy you! Have I not been warning you these one hundred and twenty years saying: 'Repent of your sins' and you did not heed me. Now you shall take your reward!"

The crowd of sinners tried then to enter the ark by force, but the wild animals keeping watch around the ark set upon them, and many were killed while the rest escaped only to meet death in the waters of the deluge.

3. *Falsehood and Curse in the Ark*

Two creatures of a most peculiar kind found refuge in the ark. Among the beings that came to Noah there was also Falsehood asking for admission. Noah replied to Falsehood: "You saw that I took into the ark only those who came in pairs. You have no companion so I cannot admit you."

Falsehood went off then to look for a partner. He met Curse. Curse asked Falsehood: "Whence do you come?" Falsehood had to tell the truth that time. So he said: "I came to Noah's ark, but he did not grant me admission since I have no partner. Do you, Curse, want to become my partner?" Curse asked: "What will my reward be?" Falsehood answered: "All that I earn will belong to you."

Thus the pair, Falsehood and Curse repaired to the ark. Noah, upon seeing Falsehood's wife, admitted the pair. When the time came to leave the ark, Falsehood noticed that whatever he gathered disappeared at once. Falsehood asked Curse his partner: "Where is all that I accumulated by the sweat of my brow and the toil of my hands?" Curse answered him and said: "Did we not agree to the condition that I might take what you earn?" Falsehood heard these words and kept silent and had to go away as empty-handed as he came.

CHAPTER IV

AGE OF CONFUSION

AND Cush, the son of Ham (Noah's son), married, and when his wife gave birth to a son he named him Nimrod. Cush loved Nimrod very much, for he was the child of his old age. He gave him the garments of skin which God Himself had made for Adam and Eve when they were driven out from Paradise. Cush had inherited these garments from his father Ham. Adam and Eve had bequeathed them to Enoch; Enoch had given them to Methuselah, and Methuselah had left them to Noah. Noah had taken them with him into the ark. Upon leaving the ark Ham stole the garments and had them hidden from the eyes of his father and brothers. Finally Ham gave them to his first-born son, Cush. The latter, too, hid the garments of skin for many years, and when his son Nimrod became twenty years of age he gave them to him.

These garments of skin performed miracles: He who wore them became invincible and awesome. And thus when Nimrod put on these gar-

ments, all animals and birds, upon seeing him, fell down before him in awe and fear. He also struck terror in the hearts of people, for none knew the source of his strength, and all ascribed it to his own mighty personality. So they appointed Nimrod king over them.

Nimrod chose Shinar as his capital. From there he extended his rule farther and farther until he became the sole ruler of the whole world. He erected there a throne made of cedar wood, upon which arose four thrones of iron, copper, silver and gold, one on the top of the other. Nimrod turned men away from God and declared himself to be a god.

It was then that the people began to say that the end of the days had come, since the heavens sink down once in every one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years. But Nimrod said to the people: "Let us build four pillars on all four corners of the earth to support the heavens!" But when they decided to erect the pillars they divided themselves into three groups. One group said: "Let us go up to heaven and make war with God." Another group said: "Let us ascend to heaven and set up our idols there." A third group said: "Let us climb up to heaven and ruin the heavenly host with our weapons." Thus, the original pretext was forgotten, and the rebellious work had begun.

In the plain of Shinar, or Babylonia, they began to make bricks to build the tower; and many, many years were spent on it. The tower reached such a height that it took a year to climb to the top. The tall trees seemed to those on top of the tower like blades of grass, and giants appeared to them as grasshoppers. A brick was more precious to the builders than a human being. If a man fell down and died, nobody cared; but if a brick dropped down, they all wept and mourned their loss, saying: "Woe, when shall we bring up another brick to replace it!"

God saw their work and was displeased. But because they lived in peace and harmony, He did not resolve to destroy them utterly. Instead, God confused their language, so that one did not understand the language of another. Instead of possessing one language, one speech and one dialect, they began to speak to one another in different languages and dialects. And the great confusion took place; nobody knew what the other spoke. If one would ask for an ax, the other would hand him a shovel; and getting angry he would throw the shovel at him and kill him. So they left off building the tower, and God scattered them from there upon all the faces of the earth. The chief builders who said they would ascend to heaven and fight God He changed into apes, who be-

came a derision to all who saw them. And as to the unfinished tower, a third thereof sank into the earth, another third was destroyed by fire. The rest of the tower is standing until this day.

CHAPTER V

ABRAHAM, FAITHFUL SERVANT OF GOD

1. *Birth of Abraham*

TERAH was an old man of seventy years when his son, Abraham, was born. And Terah made a great feast to which he invited all his friends and the magicians of his city; and they all ate, drank and rejoiced with him. When the feast was over they all returned to their homes.

They were on their way home when they noticed a gigantic star shining in the heavens and illuminating the road like a pillar of fire. They all wondered at the strange sight. While gazing at it, behold, the star shot through the entire length of the sky and swallowed four stars. So the magicians interpreted the sight thus: "Surely, the son born to Terah now, will become mighty, destroy many nations and conquer the world."

Accordingly, they went to Nimrod and told him all they saw and their interpretation. Nimrod feared greatly, and said to the magicians: "What

is your advice, that I should do?" The magicians answered him and said: "Buy the child of Terah, deliver him to us and we will kill him." Nimrod replied: "Your advice pleases me." Nimrod sent for Terah.

Terah came to the king who said to him: "I was told that the son recently born to you, would destroy many peoples and conquer the whole world. Now, therefore, ask for him as much gold and silver as you wish, and give me your son, that I may do with him as I see fit." Terah became exceedingly angry with Nimrod's proposition, but held his peace and said to him: "May I speak to the king?" Nimrod answered: "Speak, for I hear!" Then said Terah:

"A man came to me yesterday and said: 'Will you please sell me the horse that the king gave you, and I shall give you in its stead a stableful of straw and fodder.' So I thought to myself that I would do nothing about it until I would ask you. And now, please, my lord, tell me what to do."

Nimrod became angry and said to Terah: "O you old fool! Of what good are straw and fodder if you have no horse?" Then Terah grew bold and said to Nimrod: "Ah, my king! of what good will gold and silver be to me if I shall have no heir!"

But Nimrod's wrath grew. And Terah fearing him said: "However, my king, if this be your

desire, take my son and do with him as you wish. But keep the gold and silver, too!" And Nimrod insisted that Terah take the price he offered for his son. Thereupon, Terah said to Nimrod: "Grant me three day's respite. I want to go home and console my wife, Amathlai. For great was her happiness and much her joy over the son whom she gave life. After that period, you may send your officers to take our son away." The king granted Terah his request.

When Terah returned home and related the whole event to Amathlai, she wept bitterly, and did neither eat nor drink, but kept on crying: "Would that I died for you, O my baby!" But when the fourth day was on hand, the king's officers came to take the baby away. "Give us your child," they shouted, "or the king will destroy you and yours!" So Terah gave the officers a slave's baby born at the same time, and his baby he hid in a cave.

Then Abraham became hungry and cried. And God sent him the angel, Gabriel, who fed him and took care of him for three years until it was time for him to leave the cave and to recognize the true God.

2. *Abraham Recognizes God*

When Abraham became three years of age, he left the cave, as Gabriel told him. It was night,

darkness reigned over the earth. But Abraham perceived the stars sparkling like precious stones, and said: "Surely, these are the gods!" All night long Abraham paid homage to the stars.

When dawn came to the world, the heavens paled, and the stars disappeared. Abraham became crestfallen: "These are not the gods," he said to himself in despair. "Then, what is God?"—as he was thus pondering, behold, in the East there appeared a large red disk; the paleness of the world vanished, light came, and a world beautiful before the dazed eyes of the child: "This *is* my god!" he exclaimed. "This is God and I will praise him."

The day was spent. Little by little evening shadows spread over the world. The sun sank way down in the West. Abraham became disheartened: "This is not the god either!" he said in utter dejection. "God must be an everlasting being, not a creature of the day." Then, did the moon break forth through the darkness. "This must be god!" said the bewildered child. But soon the moon, too, vanished. And Abraham became greatly distressed.

Soon Gabriel appeared to Abraham and brought him to a brook of fresh water and said: "Bathe in the water and be cleansed!" Abraham did so. Gabriel spoke again. "There is one supreme being who is God. He created all: the earth, sun,

moon and stars. He created everything on earth. Nothing is hidden from Him, He gives both life and death. He sees all, but not all see Him."

Abraham heard the words of the angel, and prostrated himself, praising and praying to God, creator of heaven and earth.

3. *Abraham Teaches the Belief in the True God*

Terah, Abraham's father was an idol maker. He set up a shop in which he traded in all kinds of idols; small ones and big ones, idols of wood, of stone and precious idols of gold and silver. When Abraham became of age, his father wanted him to take up the same trade and began to train him for that. Once, when Terah had to go away from home for some time, he ordered Abraham to keep shop for him. Terah said good-bye to his son and left, and Abraham stayed at the shop.

Soon a customer came, and asked the price of a new idol. Abraham told him. The man paid the price and was about to leave, when Abraham asked him: "How old are you?"

"I am thirty years of age," answered the man.

"Thirty years of age," repeated Abraham, "and you are going to worship this idol which I made but to-day!"

The customer considered the truth of the matter, gave back the idol and received his money back.

Soon an old man came in and said to Abraham:

"I am an old man and poor, give me a god as poor as I." So Abraham gave him a small idol and waited for the man to pay for it. When the man was about to go, Abraham asked:

"How old are you, old man?"

The man answered:

"I am very, very old!"

Then said Abraham:

"Aren't you ashamed, you who are so old to pay homage to an image that was made only yesterday?"

Ashamed, the man gave back the idol, took back his money and went his way.

A little later a woman came into the store and said to Abraham:

"Choose for me a big, strong and good idol to be worshiped and loved."

"Old woman, old woman," said Abraham, "all the idols are alike. None of them can help! And furthermore, what has become of the idol you bought at our shop the other day?"

"Alas," answered the old woman, "that was indeed a fine image! But thieves came during the night and stole it. It was my god!"

"If that is the case," said Abraham to her, "how can you worship gods that cannot even take care of themselves. How can they protect you from evil when they cannot protect themselves?"

Then answered the woman:

"If what you say is true, whom shall I serve then?"

Abraham replied:

"Serve the God of gods, the God of heaven and earth, He who created the whole world!"

When she came home, she found that the thieves brought back her theft. But she took a stone and shattered her restored idol. She dragged the pieces through the streets of the city and shouted aloud: "It is foolish to worship idols, the handiwork of men! Follow Abraham and he will teach you to worship the true God, the God who created heaven and earth and all their hosts."

Many people were converted to the true belief by the words of the woman, but she herself had to pay with her life for her faith, for Nimrod, the king, ordered her to be put to death.

4. *Abraham Breaks His Father's Idols*

When Nahor and Haran saw that Abraham failed as a shop-keeper, they advised their father to make him a priest. That advice pleased Terah, and he told his son to be ready to become a priest. Abraham asked his father: "What does a priest have to do?" So Terah instructed him: "A priest serves the idols, feeds them, attends to them, and offers peoples' prayers to them. . . ." Accordingly, Abraham assumed the duties of a priest.

Abraham, thereupon, brought savory meat and good wine, and placed them before the idols and said to them: "Take the sacrifice and eat, take the wine and drink that you may favor with your august blessings those who sacrifice to you." But the idols, lifeless images that they were, did not stir. . . . Then Abraham began to say aloud: "Woe unto my father and his wicked generation who believe in these blocks of wood.

"They have mouths but they speak not;

Eyes have they, but they see not.

They have ears, but they hear not;

Noses have they, but they smell not.

They have hands, but they handle not;

Feet have they, but they walk not."

While Abraham was thus mocking at the gods, a woman came and brought a sacrifice to them. Abraham said to her: "Go home, and I will offer your sacrifice to the gods."

Abraham, thereupon, took a hatchet and broke his father's idols. He destroyed every one of them, leaving only the biggest idol. He, then, placed the hatchet in the hands of the remaining idol, and set before it the woman's sacrifice.

Terah returned home, and when he saw what his son did to his idols he became very angry, and said to his son: "Who has done all this? There was nobody else here but you!"

Abraham calmly replied:

"Father, this is what happened. A woman came in this morning and brought a sacrifice to the gods. She did not say which of the gods, so all of them began to fight among themselves, everyone trying to reach for the savory meat. The big idol, over there, became so enraged over the ungodly behavior of the rest, that he took the hatchet and broke them all. . . . Here he is standing, hatchet in hand!"

Terah shouted to Abraham in great anger and said:

"What, are you making a fool of your father? Have these idols, which I myself made, a spirit, or a soul to do all these things? It is you who have played this mischief!"

Then said Abraham:

"Father, let your own ears hear what your mouth is saying. If there is no soul in these gods how can you expect them to hear your prayer, or to accept your sacrifices. How can you put your trust in them?"

Terah, realizing how rebellious his son was, decided to put the case before Nimrod, the king, from whom he had saved Abraham in his childhood. Thereupon Terah went to Nimrod and told him all that happened, at which Abraham was ordered to present himself before Nimrod.

5. *The Furnace of Fire*

Nimrod asked Abraham what he had done, and he told him the same story that Terah had heard. Nimrod said little and ordered him imprisoned. At the end of ten days, Nimrod gathered together all his princes and great men, and put before them the case of Abraham. The assembly decided that Abraham be put into a furnace of fire and be burned. "If there be," they said, "an all-powerful, invisible God, let him save Abraham!"

Before Abraham was put into the fire, Nimrod approached him and said:

"Why must you burn? Worship my idols and you will live!"

Said Abraham, mockingly:

"Why should I worship the idols of wood, when the fire can consume them?"

Nimrod answered triumphantly:

"Worship, then, the fire! There is no greater god than fire."

"But water is stronger than fire. Water extinguishes fire," replied Abraham.

"That is true," retorted Nimrod. "Pay homage to the water, then."

"Yet the clouds are stronger, for they contain the water."

"Serve the clouds, the majestic clouds!"

"Yes," said Abraham, "but the wind controls the clouds."

"Mighty is the wind and all-powerful. Surely, that is a great god," said Nimrod impatiently.

"But then why not worship Man who is able to control the wind," answered Abraham.

"True—Man is the supreme being, and I am most powerful—a god, worship me!" Nimrod said with satisfaction.

"But I worship the Almighty who is father of all mankind and creator of all," said Abraham proudly.

"Then I will have you thrown into this heated furnace, and may your God help you if he can," Nimrod said wrathfully.

Now the great miracle happened: those men who approached the furnace to cast Abraham into it, were burned by the flames which flared out.

But Abraham was saved by the Eternal, Himself. For God sent His word and the mighty fire was quenched. The torches turned into beautiful trees, that were covered with green leaves, and brought forth sweet-smelling blossoms, and yielded fruit, marvelous to look at and good to eat. For three days and three nights, Abraham dwelt in the furnace which was a veritable garden of Eden. . . . He spent most of his time in praying to God saying: "O God, have mercy upon

all people who wish to do me evil! Create in them, I pray thee, a clean heart, and open Thou their eyes to see the light of righteousness and goodness."

All Nimrod's servants came and told him: "Behold, Abraham is walking in the midst of the furnace!" At first the king would not believe this, but soon most of his faithful servants came to tell him the same. Thereupon, Nimrod and his officers went to the furnace. He called there to Abraham and said: "Come forth, O Abraham, out of the furnace! No evil will be done to you."

When Abraham came forth, Nimrod said to him: "Tell me, please, how is it that you were not burned by the great fire, and how is it that the coal changed into fragrant trees and the furnace into a garden the like of which I have never seen?"

Abraham made the following reply:

"The God of heaven and earth in whom I put my trust, He did deliver me from the fire and did all that you saw."

Thereupon, Nimrod gave Abraham presents and sent him away from him in peace. Moreover, three hundred men followed Abraham withersoever he went, saying unto him: "We are your servants: withersoever you go, we will go, and whatsoever you command us, we will do, and your God we shall serve."

6. Abraham Leaves His Fatherland

God had tried Abraham with ten tests and he had withstood them all. One of these was the departure from his native land. And this is how it came about.

For a period of two years, when the miracle of the furnace was still fresh in the memory of the people and their king, Abraham was left to worship God unmolested, and to convert as many people to his faith as he could. But at the end of the two years, Nimrod dreamed a dream: In his dream, he found himself with his army in the valley near the fiery furnace, into which Abraham had been cast. He saw that a man who resembled Abraham came out of the furnace and ran after him with drawn sword. He became terribly frightened and ran away from him. While running, the man threw an egg at Nimrod's head. The egg broke and became a great stream, wherein Nimrod and his entire army were drowned. Everybody died; only he and three men survived. These three men, Nimrod observed, looked just like himself, in form, stature and attire. They were running, when, of a sudden, the stream became an egg again. A little chick broke forth from it, flew up, and sat upon the head of the king, where it bored out one of his eyes.

Nimrod awoke in the morning very much dis-

turbed and his fear was exceedingly great. He assembled all his wise men and all his magicians and told them his dream. One of his wise men, Anuki, by name, said to Nimrod: "This is the interpretation of the dream, O King! Misfortune will come to you at the hands of Abraham. A time will come when he and his followers will wage war against you, and he will prevail. Your army will be entirely annihilated. You and three kings of your allies will escape. . . . But later on you will lose your life at the hands of one of Abraham's descendants. This is the interpretation of the King's dream. It is coming to pass now as your magicians have predicted at the birth of Abraham, fifty-two years ago. As long as Abraham lives, neither you nor your kingdom can exist. . . ."

Nimrod took Anuki's words to heart, and sent some of his servants to seize and kill Abraham. Eliezer, Abraham's slave, heard of this and told Abraham thus: "If you do not escape now you shall surely be killed." Abraham escaped and sought refuge at the house of Shem, son of Noah. And the king's officers looked in vain for Abraham. Terah came to visit his son in his hiding place, and his son said to him:

"Father, let us leave this godless land of Nimrod and depart for the land of Canaan, which was promised to us, but which Canaan, son of Ham, took possession of; there we will worship

the true God unmolested. You, my father, hear my voice and forsake the idols and Nimrod, and follow the true God, He who rescued me out of the Furnace of Fire.”

Terah resolved to leave his native land together with Abraham, his son, and Lot, his grandson. This deed of repentance pleased God greatly. But they did not go so far as Canaan, for they stopped at Haran and stayed there. The land was pleasant and its inhabitants were kind and good, and walked in the ways of justice and righteousness.

It was about that time when God commanded Abraham to leave Haran and go to the land promised him. Abraham did not want to leave his old father in a strange land. But God told him He would take care of his father—and Abraham went as a stranger to the promised land, Canaan.

CHAPTER VI

THE CITIES OF WICKEDNESS

1. *Lot Separates from Abraham*

ABRAHAM settled in the land of Canaan at the command of God, and he taught the knowledge of the true God to all the inhabitants of the land. Lot, his nephew, went with him too. God blessed them both, and they possessed great wealth: sheep, cattle and servants. Soon there developed quarrels between the shepherds of Lot and the shepherd of Abraham, the chief reason being this: Lot's shepherds considered the land of Canaan as their master's already, and did not respect other people's property, whereas Abraham's respected the rights of the present land-owners.

As the quarreling increased, Abraham decided to part from his nephew. Accordingly, he called Lot and said to him: "I beg of you, let there be no quarrel between you and me or between your herdsman and mine; for we are relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you will go to the left, then I will go to the

right; or you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

Then Lot looked about and saw that all the plain of the Jordan was well-watered. So he chose that place to live therein. And that place was the wicked city of Sodom whose people sinned greatly against God. When Lot separated from Abraham, he separated from his God also.

2. *Sodomite Customs*

The inhabitants of Sodom, 'Amorah and the other cities of the plain were sinful and godless. They had in their country a very wide valley where they gathered each year with their wives and children and all belonging to them, to celebrate, in a most revolting manner, a feast lasting many days. If a merchant of another land happened to pass through their country, the Sodomites would beseege him and rob him of whatever he possessed, even of his clothes, and drive him out of the city.

The cause of the wickedness was their great wealth. Their soil was full of gold: vegetables, when plucked, exposed gold deposits where their roots had rested. They became greedy for more and more gold and wanted to prevent strangers from enjoying their riches. They, moreover, begrudged their own townspeople. If they observed that a man had great riches and carried gold and silver

with him they would go to a nearby ruin, and while one was conversing with him, another would lean against the broken wall, which, in falling, would kill the rich man. Then the plotters would divide the money.

So, the very rich took care not to have gold about them. But there was no hiding from the sly Sodomites. When they made up their minds to commit theft, they used to ask their victims to take care of some scented bottles of oil. Unwittingly, the rich would do them the favor, putting the bottles among their treasured gold and silver. And thus in the dead of the night, they would steal the man's wealth, for the scent of the urns would reveal the treasures.

These people appointed judges over them: Shakrai (Liar), Shakrurai (Deceiver) Zaiphai (Falsifier) and Matzle-dina (Perverter of Judgment). And such were the laws that they made for their people:

The owner of one ox was to render two days' shepherd's duty to the city, but the owner of two, only one. For the use of a ferry, a traveler had to pay four zuz, but if he waded through the water he must pay double the amount. And if a man cut off the ear of his neighbor's donkey—it would be given to the wrongdoer until the ear grew back. . . .

At the advice of these judges the cities set up

public beds. When a stranger arrived, three men seized him by his head and three, by his feet, and put him on one of these beds by force. If he was too short to fit into it perfectly, his six attendants pulled his limbs until he filled it out; if he was too long for it they tried to make him fit just the same, by actually shortening his body. . . . Thus the harsh hospitality of the Sodomites was known far and wide.

Travelers, therefore, avoided these cities. But if some unlucky fellow did happen to come into the city, the people would give him gold and silver aplenty, but no bread. Then, the stranger would die of starvation. When he died, the people would gather about him, take back the marked gold and silver which they had given him.

The cruelty of the Sodomites knew no bounds: Lot had a daughter, Paltith, who, though married to a Sodomite, still remembered the hospitality rendered to strangers in her uncle's land. Once when a beggar came to town, and the court issued a proclamation that none should give him anything to eat or drink, Paltith had pity on the poor man, and every day when she went to draw water from the well, she hid food in her pitcher for this man who waited there for it. As the beggar did not die of starvation, the Sodomites suspected that some one in their midst was disobedient to the decree. After an investigation they caught Paltith

in the act of giving food to the beggar. She paid for this kindness with death—by being burned alive.

3. *The Elamite's Experience at Sodom*

Once upon a time it happened that a man traveling from Elam arrived in Sodom toward evening. He rode upon a donkey which was covered with a magnificent, many-colored carpet. Night fell and the stranger had no place to go into for shelter for no one would invite him.

As the man was sitting alone in the marketplace, a cunning and wicked Sodomite, Hedod by name, passed by him, and upon seeing the rare carpet which he at once coveted, he said to its owner: "Whence do you come, and whither do you go?" So the man answered him: "I am on my way home to Elam, and I am coming now from Hebron. Passing here, night fell and I had no place to go to, although I have food for myself and fodder for my donkey." Thereupon Hedod replied: "I shall provide you with whatever you need, and shall be more than glad to have you go with me to my house. Only do not stay in the street all night."

Thus was the Elamite persuaded, and followed the sly Hedod. He stopped at his house overnight. When he wanted to leave in the morning, Hedod said to him: "You had better have your break-

fast, and go after that." After breakfast Hedod told him: "The day is almost spent, stay with me tonight also." He talked so friendly that the Elamite let himself be persuaded.

But on the next morning, the Elamite insisted that he had to go, and asked his host for his carpet and rope, which Hedod had kept for him.

"You have surely had a dream," answered Hedod, "and I can interpret it for you: the rope signified that you will live long, and the many-colored carpet meant a beautiful orchard: your god loves you and he will grant you a beautiful orchard wherein you will plant all sorts of fruit trees."

The Elamite said surprisedly: "No, my host. It was not a dream, but while awake, you took the carpet and the rope from me." Hedod made the following answer: "Now, kindly pay me three shekels for my interpretation fee. I charge everybody four pieces, but since you are my guest, I shall take three pieces of silver."

The stranger shouted bitterly, ran to the court of justice and told the judges his tale. But Hedod came to court, too, to tell his side of the case. And the judge gave the following verdict: "Hedod is known in this city as an expert interpreter of dreams and what he tells is true."

When the Elamite insisted upon his rights, the Sodomites surrounded him and drove him out of

their city, while the man wept bitterly for the loss of his rare carpet and the sad adventure.

4. *Destruction of the Cities of Wickedness*

God said: "The complaint has come that the sin of Sodom and 'Amorah is very great. I will go down now and see whether they have done exactly as the complaint comes to Me; and if they have not, I will know." And God revealed unto Abraham that which He resolved to do to the wicked cities.

Then, when the two angels went towards Sodom, to destroy it, Abraham remained standing before God. Then Abraham approached Him and said:

"Wilt Thou, O Lord, sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are within the city fifty righteous men, wilt Thou sweep away and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from Thee to do this: to slay the righteous with the wicked! And that the righteous should be treated as the wicked, far be it from Thee! Shall the Judge of all the earth not do what is just?"

Then said God to Abraham:

"If I find within the city of Sodom fifty who are righteous, I will forgive all the place for their sake."

Abraham continued:

"I have ventured to speak to God, even though

I am but dust and ashes. Suppose there be five lacking of the fifty righteous, wilt Thou sweep away all the city for lack of five?"

And God answered:

"I will not sweep away if I find forty-five there."

Abraham spoke yet again and said to Him:

"Suppose only forty are found there?"

God replied:

"For the sake of forty I will not do it."

Abraham moreover continued:

"Oh, let not the Lord be angry, but let me speak. Suppose thirty are found there?"

He answered:

"I will not do it if I find thirty there."

Abraham said again:

"Now, since I have ventured to speak—suppose twenty are found there?"

God replied:

"For the sake of the twenty I will not destroy it."

Then Abraham said:

"Oh, let not the Lord be angry but let me speak once more. Suppose only ten are found there?"

And God answered:

"Even for the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

God departed from Abraham and Abraham knew that the doom of the wicked cities was sealed since there were found not even ten righteous.

The angels that God sent to destroy the wicked cities had first executed another mission. They came to bring Abraham the good tidings that Sarah, his wife, would give birth to a son. To Abraham three archangels came—Michael, Raphael and Gabriel; but to Sodom only the last two went; Raphael to save Lot, and Gabriel to destroy the city.

The two angels, then, in human form and appearance, came to Sodom in the evening, and as Lot was appointed chief justice on that day, he was sitting at the gate of the city. Brought up in the house of Abraham, Lot recalled the beautiful custom of extending hospitality, and when he saw the two angels before him in human form and appearance, disguised as travelers, he invited them to his house. But the angels refused his hospitality first, saying they would spend the night in the street. But when Lot urged them strongly they consented to spend the night with him.

As Edith, Lot's wife, saw the two men approaching, she shouted to him: "Do not let these people enter our home." At this she took a carpet and divided their dwelling in two parts, one for herself and one for her husband, and said to him: "If you love your guests so much, entertain them under the shadow of *your* roof."

Lot began to prepare a meal for his guests when

he found that there was no salt in the house. So he said to his wife: "Will you please do me a favor as to give the salt for the guests." And she answered in anger: "What, do you want me to disobey our laws? Do you want to introduce this evil custom of hospitality in Sodom? I will never listen to you in that!"

But when Lot was insistent, Edith, who was short of salt, went to borrow it from her neighbor and that was how she betrayed her husband. For the neighbor said to Edith:

"How is it that you did not provide yourself with salt during daytime?" And she replied: "We had plenty of it, until some guests came to us."

In this way the news that Lot entertained strangers was spread throughout the city. And before they had all lain down, the citizens of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house, calling and shouting to Lot: "Where are the men who came to you to-night?" Lot pleaded with his townspeople to spare the men, since they were his guests; but they shouted to him:

"Stand back, you foreigner! Are you going to set up new laws for us?—Wait, we will treat you worse than them! . . ."

As the mob advanced to force the door open, they were stricken with blindness and could not find the door. And the angels said to Lot:

"Have you anyone else here? Bring your sons-in-law, your sons and daughters, and whomever you have in this city, for we are about to destroy the city."

Lot brought this news to his kinsmen. But these mocked at him and said:

"You fool! Are you crazy?—The city is happy and rejoicing—violins, cymbals, and flutes resound in the city and you say, 'Sodom will be destroyed.' "

Lot left them and went to collect his debts from those who owed him, but the angels hurried him; then Lot began to gather his jewels, but the messengers of God took hold of him, and his wife and his two daughters, and led them outside of the city. And, at the same time, the rain that was falling down upon Sodom and 'Amorah, changed into brimstone.

When the angels had brought Lot and his family forth and set them without the city, they said: "Do not look backwards but run for your lives."

But Lot asked the angels:

"Let me run to that small town of Zoar, since it will be impossible for me to reach the heights."

The angels granted him this boon, too. But as they were running, Lot's wife could not control herself, looked behind, and was immediately changed into a pillar of salt—the article she had begrudged her husband's guests. The pillar exists

near the river Kidron until this day. The cattle lick it all day long, and in the evening only the feet thereof remain; but when the morning comes, it is again a grown pillar of salt.

CHAPTER VII

ABRAHAM'S IMPATIENCE WITH AN OLD MAN

ONCE upon a time, Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, as usual, waiting for stray wayfarers to give them shelter and food. As it was drawing towards evening he saw an old man coming near, Abraham ran to meet him and said to him:

"If it pleases you, stranger, do not pass my house, but come into it, eat, rest, stay overnight, and in the morning continue your journey."

But the old man said:

"No, I shall rather stay outside and sleep under the tree."

Abraham pleaded with the stubborn man until he consented to spend the night in the tent of his host. Abraham took milk, butter, cheese and cakes, and placed them before the man. The old man ate and drank and was well pleased. Then said Abraham to him:

"My friend, bless, now, God, the creator of heaven and earth, who provided food for all His creatures."

The guest answered:

"I do not know your God; I shall praise only that god which I knew since my earliest youth."

Abraham, thereupon, commenced to instruct his guest in the knowledge of the true God, as he was wont to do. But the old man said to him:

"What is it to you, and who are you to dissuade me from my god? Leave me alone! Let me continue my life the way I started it!"

But Abraham became angry and said to the old man:

"Leave my house immediately, you stubborn old fool!"

The man straightway left Abraham's tent, and the darkness of the night swallowed him up.

This act displeased God. He appeared before Abraham and said to him:

"Where is the man that came to your tent to-night?"

Abraham replied:

"Stubborn was the man and idolatrous. I tried to explain the true God to him and make him believe in Thee, my Lord. But he did not want to hearken unto me. He angered me greatly, and therefore I sent him away from my house."

The Eternal then made the following reply:

"Have you, O Abraham, taken notice of what you have done?—Think of it. I have been patient with this man for so many years—I clothed and

fed him all this time and did not mind his not worshipping Me, but when you had to support him for one night you became impatient with him! You have driven him out in wrath from your house."

Abraham understood how great was his sin and he prayed to God: "I pray Thee, O my Lord, forgive my iniquity."

God, thereupon, said:

"I shall not pardon your transgression unless you beg the old man's forgiveness."

Abraham hastily left his house and ran in search of the old man whom he found in the wilderness. He prostrated himself before the man, pleading and entreating for his forgiveness. The man became so impressed by Abraham's pleas that he forgave him, and went back to the tent in peace.

Now, God appeared again unto Abraham and said:

"Because you have hearkened unto My words and did that which pleased Me, I, too, will remember My covenant with you and your descendants: when they sin against Me, I shall chastise them, but My covenant with them I shall never revoke."

CHAPTER VIII

HOSPITALITY AND INSTRUCTION

ABRAHAM lived in Beersheba many years, and from there he had spread the word of the true God. He had built a very large and spacious house, having four doors facing all four sides of the earth: East and West, North and South. For he said, "Let every weary traveler have easy access to my home, and not have to look for the entrance." He also planted a beautiful garden around the house. And Abraham's house was always open for all passers-by who flocked there daily to eat and drink. If one were hungry and came to Abraham's, he would be supplied with all he needed, if one were in tatters and came to Abraham's, he would be clothed with garments.

After the travelers would eat and drink, they would express their thanks to their host, and he would reply:

"Don't give thanks to me, but to the Host of us all, Him who provides daily maintenance for us all!"

Perplexed, the guests would say:

"Where is that Host of whom you speak?"

"He is the Lord of the whole world! He rules heaven and earth, and the whole is full of His glorious Presence."

Then would the people ask to be instructed how to express thanks to the Lord of the Universe, and how to walk in the paths of righteousness and of God. Abraham, thereupon would show all the people the right way of living. And Abraham's house thus became not only a lodging-place for hungry and needy, but also a place for instruction of the knowledge of the true God and the right way of living.

CHAPTER IX

ISHMAEL

1. *Ishmael and His Mother Cast Out*

IT came to pass at that time, at the end of one year and four months of Abraham's dwelling in the land of the Philistines, that God remembered what He had told Sarah and he did to her as He had promised. So Sarah bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the fixed time which God had told him. Abraham named him Isaac. And Sarah said: "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."

When the child grew up, Abraham made a great feast on the day that he was weaned. All the great people of the land of the Philistines and their king, Abimelech, came to the feast. Terah, Abraham's father and Nahor, his brother, came to Philistia from Haran to rejoice with Abraham.

Ishmael, Abraham's son by his wife Hagar, the Egyptian, was grown up in those days—he was fourteen years old when Sarah gave birth to Isaac. God was with Ishmael, and when he grew up he

learned the use of the bow and became a skilful archer.

Once, when Isaac became five years of age, and as he sat in front of Ishmael's tent, Ishmael took his bow and arrow and intended to slay Isaac. Sarah saw this and it grieved her exceedingly—and she came to her husband and said: "Cast out this slave girl, Hagar, and her son, for the son of this slave girl shall not be heir with my son, Isaac." This request was exceedingly displeasing to Abraham on account of his son Ishmael. But God said to Abraham:

"Do not be displeased because of the lad and because of your slave girl. Listen to all that Sarah says to you for only through the line of Isaac shall your name be perpetuated. But I will also cause the son of Hagar to become a great nation, because he is your son."

Then Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a bottle of water and gave it to Hagar, and he put the boy upon her shoulder and sent her away; and she departed and strayed in the wilderness of Beersheba. When the water in the skin bottle was gone, she left the child under one of the shrubs, and went a short distance away and sat down opposite him, for she said, "Let me not see the death of the child"—so she sat there and lifted up her voice and wept, while Ishmael her son was crying, too.

God heard the voice of the lad, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said: "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the cry of the boy. Rise, lift him up, and hold him fast by the hand, for I will make him a great nation." And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the boy to drink. God was with the boy, and he grew up and lived in the wilderness of Paran. From her own fatherland, Egypt, Hagar chose her son a wife, *Meribah*.

2. *The Nail of the Tent and Ishmael's Wives*

Ishmael's wife gave birth to four sons and one daughter and afterward Ishmael, his mother and children returned to the wilderness. There, they made themselves tents in which they dwelt while staying in one place, for they used to wander from one place to another. God blessed Ishmael because of his father, Abraham, and he became exceedingly wealthy: in cattle, in sheep and in tents.

After some years elapsed, Abraham said to Sarah, his wife: "I want to go visiting my son, Ishmael. I am longing to see him, for it is long since I sent him away from me." So Abraham rode upon one of his camels to the wilderness to look for his son, for he heard that Ishmael and all that belonged to him dwelt there.

Abraham reached his son's tent about noon-

time. He did not find his son nor Hagar at the tent, but his wife, Meribah, and her children were sitting at the entrance of the tent. Abraham greeted the woman but she did not answer him. Then said Abraham:

"Where is Ishmael, your husband?"

Meribah answered irritably:

"He has gone away, a-hunting, and his mother went with him."

Abraham was still mounted upon the camel, and saw how Ishmael's wife was beating her children, cursing them and their father. . . . She took no notice of the stranger at all. Then said Abraham to his son's wife:

"Please daughter, give me a little water, for I am thirsty and tired."

Then the shrew shouted in anger:

"We have neither water nor bread!"

But Abraham did not get angry, instead, he talked calmly to Meribah, and said to her:

"When Ishmael, your husband, returns home, say these words to him: 'A very old man from Philistia came here to look for you. I did not ask him who he was, but I can describe his appearance. He said to me to tell you in his name to remove the nail of the tent which you placed there and put another nail in its stead.'"

Abraham finished his instructions to the woman, turned and went homeward on his camel.

When Ishmael and his mother returned to the tent, Meribah told her husband all that the old man asked her to say to him. Ishmael knew at once that it was his father, and that his wife had not honored him. Moreover, he understood the meaning of his words. Accordingly, he complied with his father's advice and divorced his wife, sending her back to her father's house. Ishmael afterwards went to the land of Canaan and he took there another wife whom he brought to his tent.

When three more years elapsed, Abraham said: "I will go again to visit my son, Ishmael, for I have not seen him for many months." So he mounted upon his camel and rode to the wilderness. Again he reached his son's tent at noon-time. Asking for Ishmael, his wife came out from the tent and said to the stranger:

"Sir, my husband is not at home just now, he has gone a-hunting. But please, sir, come in into our tent and eat something, for you must indeed be tired from your ride."

But Abraham replied:

"I am sorry that I cannot stop, as I am hurrying to continue my journey. But, I am very thirsty. Kindly give me some water to drink."

Then, did Ishmael's wife hasten and brought to Abraham both water and bread, which he ate and drank. He was happy that God had given such a good wife to his son. His meal finished, Abra-

ham blessed God and Ishmael's tent. Then said he to Fatima, Ishmael's wife:

"When your husband returns, say to him thus: 'A very old man from the land of the Philistines came here and asked for you, but as you were not here, I brought him out bread and water which he ate and drank. He also said to me to tell you that the nail of the tent which you have is very good, therefore do not remove it.'"

And when Abraham concluded instructing the woman, he rode off to his home, to the land of Philistia. Ishmael soon returned to his tent and his wife, Fatima, ran out to meet him with joy and cheerfulness. She told him the words of the old man. Ishmael knew that it was his father and that his wife had honored him. So he praised God.

Ishmael took his wife, his children, his cattle and all belonging to him and he journeyed from there and went to his father in the land of Philistines. Abraham told Ishmael, his son, all that had happened between him and the first wife. Ishmael and his family stayed in that land many days; also Abraham dwelt in Philistia a long time.

CHAPTER X

THE SUPREME TEST

1. *The Challenge*

AND it came to pass when Abraham's great hospitality, good deeds, and charitable work became known all over the world, that many people forsook their idols and wrongdoing and came to him to hear his words of wisdom. They, too, began to do the right things and lived in peace and harmony with one another.

Now, on a certain day when all the angels presented themselves before God, Satan came among them. God said to Satan:

"From where do you come, O Adversary?"

He replied:

"From going back and forth on the earth, and walking up and down on it."

Then said God:

"What have you to say concerning all the children of the earth?"

The Adversary answered and said:

"I have seen all the children of the earth serving

God and remembering Him only when they are in need of something. But when their wish is granted they forsake Him and remember Him not. Abraham, son of Terah, served God and erected altars to Him wherever he came, bringing offerings upon them and proclaiming the name of God among idolaters before his son, Isaac, was born. Now, that he is born, Abraham has forsaken God, and in these many days has brought no sacrifice to God. Yet he made many great feasts because of the birth of his heir."

To this, God made the following reply:

"Have you, O Satan, observed my servant, Abraham? There is no man like him on the earth, blameless and upright, who avoids evil and reveres God. Were I to say to him: 'Bring up your son for a burnt-offering before me,' he would do it whole-heartedly and willingly."

Satan retorted:

"If Abraham will do this, even I will admit that there is no one like him in the whole world. Speak, O God, to Abraham and see whether he will not transgress and cast aside Thy words."

2. *The Test*

After this event God appeared to Abraham and said to him:

"Take your son and bring him as a sacrifice before me."

Abraham said:

"I have two sons, whom shall I take?"

God answered:

"Your only son."

Abraham said again:

"Both are only ones to their mothers. Isaac to Sarah and Ishmael to Hagar."

"Whom you love"—said God.

"I love both of them."

"Even Isaac," explained God to Abraham, and continued:

"And offer him there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I shall show you."

Abraham, thereupon, said to himself: "How can I separate my son, Isaac, from his mother who loves him so? If I tell her God's command, she may die in her sorrow. The best thing is to find an excuse for our going away." Accordingly, he came to Sarah, his wife, and said to her:

"Our son, Isaac, is grown up and he has as yet not studied the knowledge of God. Now tomorrow I want to take our son to a place of learning."

"You are right," said Sarah, "our son ought to go to a place of learning. But do take good care of him while on the journey. Give him to eat in time, do not let him walk on foot too much and do not be impatient with him."

"I shall take good care of him, my wife!" said Abraham.

After spending a whole night in weeping on account of Isaac's going, Sarah rose early in the morning and chose a very fine and beautiful suit and dressed her son. She put a lovely turban on his head, fastened a precious stone in the top of the turban, and she also gave them food for the journey. Then she went out to accompany them a little on the road. She went with them until they said: "Do return home." Then did Sarah cry again, that even Abraham and Isaac could not withhold their tears. Sarah embraced her son again and said: "My son, my son! You are going away from me to a distant place, who knows whether I will see you again."

When Sarah returned, Abraham took his two servants with him, and made a bundle of split wood for a burnt-offering, and set out to the place God had shown him.

3. *The Tricks of the Adversary*

When Abraham and Isaac were gone, Satan came to Sarah and said to her:

"Will you please tell me where your husband is?"

Sarah answered:

"My husband went with my son to put him in a place of learning."

Satan said again:

"Foolish woman, why did you let your son go—you will never see him back again."

Sarah was greatly grieved to hear this, yet she said to the Adversary:

"Can anything happen to a man unless God wishes it? Let my son continue his journey and God will do with him as it seems best to Him."

Satan was terribly disappointed, and greatly angry that Abraham was going to fulfil God's command, so he disguised himself as a very aged man and approaching Abraham he said to him:

"Are you silly or demented that you are going to do this thing? God gave you a son in your old age, and are you going to slaughter him and make him perish from the face of the earth? Don't you realize that this thing cannot come from God? He would never do such an evil thing as to say to a man 'slaughter your son'."

Abraham heard this and knew it to be the words of Satan who endeavored to turn him aside from the way of the Lord, and he rebuked Satan so that he went away from him.

Satan returned and came to Isaac disguised as a young man of his age, and said to him:

"Do you not know that your foolish old father will offer you as a sacrifice to-day? Now, my boy, do not listen to your father, for he is old and silly, but you are young and beautiful. Why should you lose your life this day?"

Upon hearing this, Isaac said to his father:

"Father, do you hear what this man is telling me?"

To which Abraham responded:

"Listen not to him nor take heed of his words, for the man is Satan, the Adversary, who wishes to turn us astray from God."

So Abraham rebuked Satan again, and he went away from them, and they continued their journey. When Satan saw that he could not prevail over them, he changed himself into a large brook of water in the road, and when Abraham and Isaac and his two young servants reached that place, they saw a brook large and powerful as mighty waters.

And they entered the brook and passed through it, and the waters at first reached their legs. And they went deeper in the brook and the waters reached up to their necks and they were all terrified on account of the water. But Abraham recognized the place, and he knew that there had been no water there before, and he said to his son:

"I know this place on which there was no brook nor water. Now surely it is Satan who is doing all this to us, to draw us aside from the commands of our God."

And Abraham rebuked Satan and said:

"The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, begone from us for we go by the commands of God!"

And Satan was terrified at the voice of Abraham and he went away from them, and the place became dry land again as it was before.

Thus they continued their way.

4. *The Sacrifice*

While they were walking along, Isaac spoke to his father:

"Father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

And Abraham answered his son, saying:

"God has made choice of you, my son, to be a perfect burnt-offering instead of the lamb."

Isaac, thereupon said to his father:

"I shall do all that the Lord has spoken to you with joy and cheerfulness of heart."

Abraham said again to his son:

"Tell me, my son, I beg of you, is there in your heart any resentment concerning this?"

Isaac made the following answer:

"I swear by God, and by your soul, O father, that there is nothing in my heart to cause me to turn aside from the word God has spoken to you. Neither limb nor muscle has stirred within me on account of this; nor is there in my heart any evil thought concerning this. But I am joyful and cheerful, and I bless God saying: 'Blessed is the Lord, Who has this day chosen me to be a burnt-offering before Him.'"

Abraham greatly rejoiced at the words of Isaac and they went on and came together to that place that the Lord had spoken of. Abraham approached to build the altar with Isaac, his son, helping him until the work was completed. Then, did Abraham take the wood, and arrange it upon the altar. He bound Isaac, in order to put him upon the wood which was upon the altar, to slaughter him and to offer him as a burnt-offering before the Lord.

Isaac spoke, thereupon, to his father:

"Father, bind me well, for I may, when beholding the slaughter-knife in your hand, begin to tremble and make the slaughtering difficult for you."

Abraham, overcoming his compassion, began to bind his son strongly. And Isaac said to him:

"Tell not mother of my death when she will be standing on the roof, or passing near a pit, lest she become frightened and meet her death, but take together some of my ashes, place them in a casket, and put the casket in her chamber, so that she may weep over my remains. . . ."

The binding of Isaac completed, Abraham put him on the top of the wood, and stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. Abraham's heart rejoiced that he was fulfilling God's command, but his eyes shed tears, for great was his compassion over his son. . . . Then the heavens opened and all the angels gathered about

God's throne, weeping and saying: "O God, why hast thou commanded Abraham to do this thing?" The tears of the angels trickled down and three drops fell into the eyes of Isaac, whose soul escaped from his body as the knife was about to touch his throat. At once a mighty voice coming from on High was heard:

"Touch not the boy!"

And when the voice was heard, Isaac's soul returned to him, and he opened his eyes and said: "Blessed art thou, O God, who revivest the dead!" . . . But Abraham said:

"God told me to sacrifice my son, and who are you, calling to me, not to do so?"

Then came the voice again:

"God declares: 'By Myself have I sworn—because you have done this thing and have not kept back your son, your only son: I will surely bless you, and I will make your descendants as many as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore, so that they shall take possession of the gates of the enemies; and all the nations of the earth shall ask for themselves a blessing like theirs, because you have obeyed My command.'"

Abraham, at once left off from Isaac, loosed his bonds and took him from the altar. But he said to God:

"Shall I go from here without having offered up a sacrifice?"

At that moment a ram was brought and put amongst the thicket. That was the ram which had been created in the twilight of Sabbath eve, in the six days of creation; this ram had pastured beneath the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, had drunk from the waters of that garden and its fragrance spread all over the world. Upon seeing this ram, Abraham offered the following prayer to God.

"Almighty God! I have not kept back from Thee my only son who is dearer to me than my own life. Therefore, do Thou, O God, have compassion on Isaac's descendants. . . . If they sin against Thee and Thou bring evil times upon them, be mindful of the offering of their father, Isaac, and forgive their sins and deliver them from their sufferings."

And God replied to his faithful servant thus:

"I know that the children of Isaac will sin before me in time to come, and I will sit in judgment upon them on the New Year's day. If they desire that I should grant them pardon, they shall blow the ram's horn on that day, and I, mindful of the ram that was substituted for Isaac as a sacrifice, will forgive them for their iniquities."

As the ram had been running toward Abraham, Satan caught hold of him and entangled his horns in the thicket, that he might not advance to Abra-

ham. The ram disentangled himself from one thicket only to be caught in another. . . . God said to Abraham as he was viewing this:

"Thus will Isaac's children be entangled now with one nation, now with another, wandering from people to people, from kingdom to kingdom, until I take the horn of this ram and blow the mighty sound of their redemption and restoration to their own land."

Thereupon did the ram free itself from the thicket, and straightway ran to Abraham, and touched the hem of his cloak. That was to indicate that it was satisfied to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac. Abraham took it, bound it and put it upon the wood which was upon the altar, and brought it up as an unblemished burnt-offering for his son. The ram was not wholly consumed for there were left: the two horns, ten veins, and the skin. The veins were used as the strings for the marvelous harps of King David; the skin served the immortal Elijah for his girdle; and as for the two horns—one was blown at the time of God's revelation on Mount Sinai, and the other will be used to proclaim the end of the Exile, the sound that will be heard from one end of the world to the other, and all the scattered people of Israel will gather together to the holy city—Jerusalem.

The place on which Abraham had erected the altar was a sacred one: the same whereon Adam

had brought the first sacrifice; Cain and Abel had offered their presents to God; and Noah had built an altar to God after he had left the ark. Abraham called that place *Yireh*, ("He shall see"—God shall remind Himself how I have not kept back my son from Him). But Shem, son of Noah, had given it the name of *Shalem* (Peace) long before. So God said: "If I let this place be called *Yireh*, Shem, the righteous, would take offence, and if I let it be called *Shalem*, Abraham would take offence. Therefore will I unite the two names and call it *Yireh-Shalem*."

Thus was the name of *Yireh-Shalem* turned into *Yerushalem*¹ (Jerusalem).

After the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, Abraham returned to his servants, and they set out for Beersheba.

5. *Sarah's Last Days*

So, sadly Satan realized that he had failed utterly—for Abraham did fulfil God's command and had really intended to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, until God ordered him to use the ram instead. But bent on causing Abraham misery, the Adversary, disguised as a very old, humble, and poor man, gained admission in Abraham's hospitable home. Immediately Satan said to Sarah:

¹ *Yeru*, *Yireh* (יראה ירו) have same numerical value in Hebrew. (216 = יראה; 216 = ירו).

"Do you not know what befell your only son when he left you with his father?"

Alarmed, Sarah exclaimed:

"Tell me, quickly, good man, what has happened? No evil, I hope!"

And Satan continued:

"Your husband built an altar on Mount Moriah, took Isaac, bound him, laid him thereon, slaughtered him and offered him up as a sacrifice. . . . And although your son wept and cried unto him: 'Have pity on my young life, O father,' your husband did not listen to him nor have pity upon him. He is slaughtered!"

His message of woeful lying finished, Satan went away. Sarah thought him to be one of the men who knew her husband and son, and therefore believed his words. She writhed with pain, her body trembled and she began to cry aloud and weep bitterly, saying: "O my son, Isaac, my son, my son! Would that I had died instead of you, Isaac, my son! I gave birth to you in my old age, and reared you and kept you as the apple of my eye. You became my very life—and now you are dead! The slaughtering-knife slayed you, consuming fire devoured you, and you are gone forever, gone from your mother. Oh, I wish I were dead, too!" And Sarah laid her head upon the bosom of one of her maids and she became as still as a stone.

Sarah rose afterwards and went about making inquiries concerning her son till she came to Hebron. Despite her great grief she found consolation in the thought that her son had fulfilled the commandment of God, by being sacrificed. Yet she kept on searching for Abraham to make sure of her son's fate. But nobody knew anything about her husband and son, nor did anyone see them. She became so weak of weariness and worry that she could not continue her journey further and her maids continued the search without their mistress.

When the Adversary beheld Sarah's plight, even his wicked, hard heart softened, and he appeared again to Sarah and told her thus:

"I am sorry, Sarah, that I had brought false tidings. No evil has befallen your son. Your husband has not slain him. Your son, Isaac, is alive!"

When Sarah heard these words, her joy was so exceedingly great, that the sudden shock killed her; so, joy caused her soul to depart from her body.

As Abraham and his son returned home to Beersheba, they looked for Sarah, but could not find her. When they inquired about her, they were told that she had gone as far as Hebron in search for them. Accordingly, husband and son went to Hebron only to find their wife and mother dead.

Both wept bitterly and mourned the loss of Sarah, and they wept so long until they had no more strength to weep.

Sarah's death was bewailed all through the land because her goodness, kindness and charity were known far and wide.

Abraham desired to bury his wife in the Cave of Machpelah, where Adam and Eve were buried. This is how he discovered this fact. When he entertained the three angels, he wanted to slaughter an ox for the meal, but the ox ran away and in pursuit of it, Abraham entered the cave of Machpelah. There he saw Adam and Eve stretched out upon couches, with candles burning at the head of their resting places and a sweet fragrance pervading the cave. Therefore, Abraham wished to obtain this cave from the children of Heth, to whom it now belonged. Abraham bought the cave from Ephron, chief of the children of Heth, for the price of four hundred shekels of silver. A deed signed by four witnesses was drawn up and the cave of Machpelah was sold to Abraham in perpetuity.

Sarah had lived one hundred and twenty-seven years, and Abraham arranged a great funeral for her. All the notables of the land came to the burial of Sarah: Shem and his son, Eber, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, the three friends of Abraham, 'Aner Eshcol and Mamre, and many other

great and noble men. And great was the lamentation for Sarah, and, for many days Abraham and his son, Isaac, mourned over the loss of Sarah.

CHAPTER XI

ISAAC, REBEKAH, AND THEIR SONS

1. *A Lily Among Thorns*

A DAUGHTER was born to Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, whose name was Rebekah. The child grew up, and became so beautiful that she found grace in the eyes of everyone who knew her. Rebekah considered the actions of her parents and kinsmen and she disliked them: they were wicked. She therefore resolved not to follow in their footsteps, but be kindhearted and good. A poor man if she saw—she gave him food and shelter; the oppressed—she pitied. Bethuel, her father, was rich and he gave her maid-servants to serve her; but Rebekah refused their service, saying: "I am strong enough to do my own work and do not need human beings like myself to serve me." And, from her earliest youth she herself did all the housework.

Now, Haran was a wicked city, so much so, that the strangers who happened to pass by there used to call it Sodom, meaning, a city as wicked

as the city of Sodom, which God destroyed for its wickedness. . . . But there was one bright spot in that town; one good soul—Rebekah. And, comparing the wickedness of the Haranites with the kindness of Rebekah, everyone used to say: "She is as a lily among the thorns."

2. *Eliezer's Mission*

Happiness departed from Abraham's house with the death of Sarah, his wife, and Isaac mourned his mother's loss for many days. In order to restore joy in his home, Abraham resolved to find a wife for his son, Isaac. He therefore called his faithful servant, Eliezer, and said to him:

"Eliezer! swear to me by God, that you will fulfil faithfully my mission."

Eliezer, thereupon took his oath, to carry out his master's command. So Abraham continued:

"I am advanced in age, and do not know the day of my death. And God blessed me in every way: I am wealthy and prosperous. But my son, Isaac, is unmarried, and I do not want him to marry one of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I live. Therefore, go to my own country and to my relatives and there get a wife for my son, Isaac."

Eliezer again promised to do so. But also said:

"Perhaps, the woman will not be willing to fol-

low me to this land. Must I then take your son back to your fatherland."

Abraham answered:

"See to it, Eliezer, that you do not take my son back there. God of heaven and earth, who took me out from my father's house and from my native land and who solemnly promised me 'To your descendants will I give this land,' He will send his angel before you and there you will get a wife for my son. But if the woman is not willing to come with you, then you will be free from this oath to me; only never take my son there."

Then did Abraham give Eliezer a paper signed by him, which made Isaac heir to all his wealth, and said to him:

"Surely, the father of the girl you will choose for my son will not refuse her going with you, when you show him this paper. Go, Eliezer, and may God help you!"

3. *Eliezer Meets Rebekah*

Eliezer took ten camels, laden with jewels and precious presents and betook himself to Haran, the city of Nahor, under the guardianship of two angels, one to protect Eliezer, and the other to watch over Rebekah.

The journey to Haran took but a few hours. At evening of the same day he reached there. For the journey was miraculous: Bright stars and

lightnings showed him the way, while the earth hastened to meet him. Eliezer was wondering at the swiftness of the journey, and he realized that God made his way successful for him, and he prayed to God saying:

“O Lord God of my master, Abraham, give me, I pray Thee, success to-day, and show kindness towards my master, Abraham. Here I am standing by the spring of water, and the girls of the town are coming out to draw water. May that young woman to whom I shall say: ‘Please let down your water-jar that I drink,’ and who answers: ‘Drink and I will also water your camels,’ may she be the one whom Thou hast chosen for Thy servant, Isaac. And by this sign I shall know that Thou hast shown kindness to my master.”

Eliezer then asked of many girls to let him have a drink, but they did not give him, saying that they were in a hurry to go home.

It was at that time that the angel who guarded over Rebekah, put it in her mind to go to the spring for water. As she approached the spring to draw the water, Eliezer noticed that the water rose up to her from the bottom of the well. He became very happy: certain of his success. He instinctively felt that that girl was the one destined for Isaac. Yet he decided to scrutinize her well.

Soon, Rebekah hearing a child crying, approached him and asked why he was crying. The

child showed her his leg wounded by a stone. Rebekah took her headkerchief, dipped it into the water of her pitcher, washed the child's wound, bandaged it, and talked nicely to him, while caressing him, saying:

"Go home, don't worry, your leg will soon heal."

The boy ran home joyously.

Then a blind woman came toward her, and Rebekah said to her: "Tell me, good woman, how will you go home?" And the woman answered: "If I won't find my home, I'll sleep in the field as I have done many a time." Rebekah left her jar at the well and accompanied the blind woman to her house.

It was getting dark when Rebekah came back to the well and most of the girls had gone home already. So, hurriedly she filled her jar with water, and placing it on her shoulder, she was about to go home when Eliezer, who saw all her previous good deeds, approached her and said:

"Please, let me drink a little water from your jar."

Straightway she answered:

"Drink, my lord."

And when he finished drinking she said:

"Wait, my lord, I will draw some for your camels, also."

As she emptied her jar into the trough many times, Eliezer was silently and steadily gazing at

her. He was certain that God sent him the right person for his master's son. So, without even inquiring first who she was, he took a golden nose ring, half a shekel in weight, and put it in her nose, and on her arms two golden bracelets weighing half a shekel.

And, Eliezer said to her:

"Whose daughter are you, tell me, please? Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

Rebekah answered:

"I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah and Nahor. And there is plenty of room in our house for you and yours to spend the night. We have plenty of straw and feed for the animals and food for you and your companions."

Upon hearing this, Eliezer bowed his head and worshipped God, saying:

"Blessed be God of my master, Abraham, who has continued to show His mercy and His faithfulness towards my master. Indeed He led me on the right way to the house of my master's relatives."

4. *Miraculous Deeds; Rebekah's Family*

Rebekah ran home and told her mother all that had happened to her at the well. And when her brother Laban, saw the nose-ring and bracelets upon his sister and heard her tale, he hastened to

Eliezer in order to kill him and take possession of all his wealth.

However, when Laban reached the well, he learned that he would be unable to do any harm to Eliezer, for he met him at the moment when Eliezer lifted up two camels and carried them across the stream. . . . Besides, there was a close resemblance between Eliezer and Abraham, so Laban thought his uncle was standing before him, and said amiably to him:

"Come in, blessed one of God, why do you stand outside? I have cleared the house, and made room for you and yours."

Eliezer, though he perceived the insincerity of Laban's words, accepted his invitation. And as he was approaching Bethuel's house, many of the townspeople gathered together around the house to do harm to the stranger who was rumored to be very rich. But upon beholding the gigantic stature of Eliezer, and hearing of his wondrous deeds, they all feigned friendliness, instead. And it was not until he reached Bethuel's house that he untied his camels—he did not want them to graze in fields of strangers—and gave them eat and drink.

They all sat down at the table to partake of the meal which was prepared for them. Now, it happened that Bethuel, too, said to himself: "I'll poison this man and become heir to all that he

possesses." Luckily, Abraham's faithful servant said: "I will not eat until I have made known my errand." Bethuel said to him, "Speak."

While Eliezer was telling about his mission, and how rich and great his master was, the angel who had guarded him all through the journey, invisibly moved the dishes, so that the poisoned one was placed before Bethuel. . . . Continuing his tale, Eliezer showed them the document he had with him, in which Abraham made Isaac, possessor of all his wealth. He also hinted to them, lest they think that Abraham was wholly dependent on them, that he might, if they deny him Rebekah, go to the other kinsmen—the daughters of Ishmael or the daughters of Lot.

Bethuel and Laban readily consented to give Rebekah in marriage to her cousin. They said:

"The matter was arranged from God; we cannot nor would alter it. Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife."

When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed before God to the ground. Then he brought gold and silver ornaments and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave costly gifts to her brother and mother. Finally he and the men that were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

5. Rebekah Marries Isaac

As they rose in the morning, they found that Bethuel had died of the poisoned dish he had intended for Eliezer. Eliezer went outside to feed the camels when his guardian angel said to him:

"Do not stay here any longer. Hasten to leave with Rebekah, Isaac's bride."

Accordingly, Eliezer approached Rebekah's mother and brother and said to them:

"Send me away, I beg of you, to my master."

But they said to him:

"Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go."

And Eliezer insisted:

"Do not delay me, since God made my mission successful. Send me away that I may go to my master."

Then they said:

"We will call the young woman and consult her."

They called Rebekah and they said to her:

"Will you go with this man?" And she answered:

"I will!"

Then did her mother and brother send her away, and blessing her they said, "Our sister: May your descendants become thousands of myriads. And may they capture the cities of their enemies."

Rebekah set out with her maids, and, riding

upon the camels they followed Eliezer. When they were approaching Beersheba, Rebekah beheld in the distance a very beautiful man standing in prayer, his hands spread heavenward in ecstatic prayer at eventide. Rebekah saw that he was not an ordinary individual and noticed the unusual beauty of the man, near whom an angel stood guard. She, therefore, said to Eliezer:

"Who is that man?"

And the reply was:

"It is my young master!"

Rebekah, thereupon covered her face with her veil. Isaac, upon seeing camels coming, approached them. . . .

After Isaac heard the wonderful adventures of Eliezer, he took Rebekah to the tent of his departed mother, Sarah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. Isaac found, at last, consolation after his mother, for his wife showed herself worthy to succeed his mother. The cloud that hovered over that tent during Sarah's lifetime and vanished at her death became visible again. The light that shone in that tent miraculously from Sabbath eve to Sabbath eve, reappeared. The blessing in the kneading-trough, too, returned with the coming of Rebekah.

Moreover, the gates of her tent were opened for the needy, wide and spacious, as they had been during the lifetime of his mother, Sarah.

Isaac thanked God for having chosen for him such a good, kind-hearted wife and Abraham set his bondman, Eliezer, free, as a reward for having so successfully executed his mission.

6. The Birth of Esau and Jacob

Isaac dwelt in the land of Canaan together with his father, Abraham, and God blessed him also with wealth and plenty. But Isaac's happiness was not complete: Rebekah did not give birth to children—she was barren.

When twenty years after their marriage had elapsed and there was as yet no child born to her, Rebekah besought her husband to entreat God for the gift of children, as his father, Abraham, had done when Sarah, his wife, was childless. Accordingly, Isaac and Rebekah repaired to Mount Moriah—the very place whereon Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac—and there, Isaac offered in behalf of his wife the following prayer:

“O Lord God of heaven and earth! Thou, whose mercies and goodness fill the earth, Thou who didst take my father from his father's house and from his birthplace, and didst bring him unto this land, and didst say to him: ‘To you and to your descendants after you will I give this land as an inheritance.’ Thou, O God, didst also promise my father, saying: ‘I will multiply your children as

the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea.' Now, my Lord, may Thy words come true."

Rebekah too, silently offered her prayer:

"Give me, O God, children who will be a blessing in the world."

God hearkened to the prayers of Isaac and his wife, and Rebekah conceived. As seven months passed, she began to suffer torturous pains, as she was bearing twin-children. But when they began to struggle constantly within her, so that she could not endure it any longer, she went to consult God at Mount Moriah. And there she was told by God:

"You will become the mother of two great nations, one will always be stronger than the other. They will continually struggle for supremacy, and the older will serve the younger."

Now, when the time came for her to become a mother, she gave birth to twins. The first one to see the light was ruddy, all over like a hairy mantle, and fully developed. So everybody named him Esau, that is to say "*Asui*, completely developed. When the second one was born, he was clean of body and fair to look at, and as his hand held the heel of Esau, they named him Jacob, meaning "he that held on to the heel."

While Esau and Jacob were small, their difference of character was not so marked. They were like the myrtle and the thorn-bush, which look alike in the early stages of their growth, and when

they attain their full size, the myrtle is known by its fragrance and the thorn-bush by its thorns. . . . Thus, until thirteen years of age both brothers went to school, and both learned in a similar manner. But at the age of thirteen, their ways parted: Jacob continued to dwell in the "tents of learning" while Esau ended his school-days and learned the art of hunting. In addition to hunting beasts, he learned the art of winning people by his hypocritical ways. He would, for example, ask his father, "What is the tithe to be given to the priests, on straw and salt," but, as everybody knows, such products are not to be tithed. Questions of this nature would make Esau appear God-fearing in the eyes of his father.

Rebekah, on the other hand was more clear-sighted, and knew her sons as they really were, not as they appeared. Abraham, the grandfather of the boys, also agreed with Rebekah and said to her: "My daughter, watch over my grandson, Jacob, for it is through him that my name will be perpetuated. He shall be a blessing in the midst of the children of men and the glory of all the descendants of Shem, our ancestor."

Thus, by cunning and hypocrisy, Esau obtained the love of his father, while by simplicity and truthfulness, Jacob gained the love of his mother and grandfather, Abraham.

CHAPTER XII

ABRAHAM'S LAST DAYS

I. *Abraham's Last Message to Isaac*

AND it came to pass that when Abraham's years, which he lived, numbered one hundred and seventy-five, that God said to Michael: "Arise and go to Abraham and say to him: 'You are about to die, set your house in order and make known your last will to your son.' "

Reluctantly, the messenger of God fulfilled his mission, for he was exceedingly sorry to take Abraham away from this world. But when he finally brought the sorrowful tidings to Abraham, and he knew that his last days on this earth were reached, he called his son, Isaac, and said to him:

"My son, you know that God, our Lord, is in heaven and on earth, there is no other God beside Him. He has taken me out from my father's house and from my birthplace. He delivered me out from the hands of Nimrod and from all the wicked people, because I have put my trust in Him. And now, therefore, my son, I command you thus: Serve

the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, and you shall love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep all His Commandments and do goodness and kindness to all the children of men. Love and protect all creatures. If a hungry one beg you for food, give it to him; a naked one—clothe him, to all unfortunate people be a comfort. When you will perform these things, then will your name be a blessing among all people of the earth. Moreover, you teach these things to all people, so that they, too, will learn to do goodness and righteousness, and will love peace and truth."

His message concluded, Abraham asked of his son, Isaac, to send to him his two grandsons, Esau and Jacob, that he might bless them ere he died.

Accordingly, Isaac sent for his two sons, but when only Jacob answered his summons, he asked: "Where is Esau, your brother?" To which Jacob replied: "My brother went hunting in the field as is his wont." So Abraham lay his hands on his grandson, Jacob, and blessing him said: "May you be a blessing and a praise throughout the world and may my name be perpetuated through you."

2. *Abraham's Death*

At last, the time for Abraham to depart from this mortal world came. At that time there gathered together the sixty-three thousand, eight hun-

dred and seventy-five days that Abraham lived and stood before God, and said thus:

“Master of the Universe! We all have come to bear witness that Abraham performed on us only righteousness, goodness and truth. He has magnified Thy name, O God, and multiplied peace in Thy world.”

Then came the word of God to Abraham in a vision, saying: “Open your eyes, Abraham, and see the reward which is ready for you.” And as God spoke these words, Abraham felt that he was being borne upon wings to the highest heights. And as he was borne higher and higher, the light increased and with it the delight of his soul. Immediately he reached a place abundant in light, through which he could see from one end of the world to the other.

Suddenly two gates of sparkling rubies opened wide, and myriads upon myriads of radiant angels flocked to Abraham. They took off his clothes and clothed him with eight garments of light made from the Clouds of Brightness. Now there emanated from the Paradise one thousand and five hundred various fragrances and they perfumed his clothes that their scent was indescribable. The angels also took two crowns made of onyx and pure gold and put them on his head, and in his hands they placed eighty myrtles, which filled the world with their fragrance.

From there they brought Abraham to a place of bright streams of water such as he had never seen before. He beheld the lilies and the myrtles surrounding the brooks, and he smelled their fragrance which filled his soul with infinite pleasure. Then they took him to the marvelous canopy that was prepared for him, and Abraham looked at it with awe. He also saw the four rivers that were streaming near the canopy—rivers of wine, of honey, of precious oil and of balsam. Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the golden vines and the pearls that were hung up on top of the canopy and he was delighted with their splendor and glory.

Abraham entered into the canopy. There he found a table of onyx ready for him with angels waiting to serve him. And while he was thus beholding all these marvelous sights, he was changed suddenly into a small child, happy and joyous. Looking about him, he saw many children running to meet him. So he played with them and rejoiced greatly in their company. Together they ran to hear the beautiful singing of the angels, together they walked under the sweet-smelling trees, and when they grew tired, they all lay down to rest under the Tree of Life.

Soon childhood passed and Abraham awoke as a youth. . . . The children all disappeared and young boys filled the place with song and joy. So

Abraham rejoiced with them, too, walking through the garden, and seeing things that he never saw before. And when youth passed, too—old age came. Now many old men surrounded Abraham. And he talked to them about mercy, kindness, charity, goodness, and they told him good words about man and the mission God gave him in the mortal world. Abraham was happy to hear that he had fulfilled his duty on earth.

The old men, thereupon, took Abraham and brought him into the two canopies made of the light of the sun and of the moon, which were prepared for him. But there was a partition of lightning between them, and passing this partition he beheld the wonderful three hundred and ten worlds that were without bound and bourne. At that time the Clouds of Brightness glided into the garden and Abraham inhaled myriads upon myriads of various fragrant odors, which caused him to feel an inexplicable delightfulness. And then came again the voice of God to Abraham saying: "That what you were shown is only a small part of the garden of Eden (Paradise)."

Abraham said to God: "Have pity on my soul and bring it to its rest." And accordingly, God took Abraham's soul and brought it up to heaven. Abraham then expired and died. And the precious stone that had hung on Abraham's neck lifted it-

self up and flew heavenward. God took it and placed it in the sun. This is why the Holy Books call the sun, Sun of Righteousness.

3. *The Mourning for Abraham*

The tidings about Abraham's death spread quickly and a general mourning and lamentation were heard in Beersheba's streets. Everybody bewailed the loss of that great man. When the news reached the neighboring cities and the distant places, people bemoaning the death of Abraham left their homes and went to Beersheba. Ishmael, far in the wilderness heard of the sad news and hurried to Beersheba to mourn his father's death. In this manner a great number of people—kings, judges and officers of the nearby cities, went to mourn Abraham in his city.

For everyone knew of Abraham, of his goodness and uprightness. And all these great people wept bitterly, bewailing the death of Abraham thus:

"Woe, woe to the world whose leader is gone!

Woe, woe to the ship whose helmsman is gone!"

When the gathered multitude heard this cry, they increased their lamentation.

Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the Hillite, which Abraham bought from the children of Heth to bury Sarah, his wife. A great number of

people attended the funeral of Abraham, and returned home after the burial to mourn the loss of the great, upright man, Abraham, for a year.

As yet there has not arisen among the people one like Abraham who walked in the ways of God, and did only that which was good and right till the day of his death. His name and memory became a blessing till this day.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BROTHERLY FEUD

1. *Esau, the Cunning*

THE older the sons of Isaac became, the more individual became their ways. Esau grew up to be a very cunning youth, besides being a mighty hunter, like Nimrod (who was still alive). Everybody admired Esau's trickery. Confronting a man who had been arrested on the suspicion of murder, Esau said to him: "Fellow, how is it that the murdered slapped you on the face?"

"Slapped me?" retorted the accused. "Why before he dared to raise his hand, I finished his life. . . ."

So he was able not only to hunt animals but also to hunt men as well. But Esau knew, that if his father knew of all his deeds he would cease loving him. Moreover, he knew what a holy and upright man his father, Isaac, was, and he desired to receive his blessing. To gain that end, Esau became very hypocritical toward his father, and he used to bring him the best of everything. Not succeed-

ing therewith he tried to appear before his father as a very charitable person. He would tell him how he had given a tenth part of what he had had to the poor and that he did not know whether he had to tithe also his salt. . . . Isaac loved Esau and considered blessing Esau before he died, thereby making him the heir to his name and line. For Isaac became blinded, both physically and mentally as to the real merit of his sons.

2. *Esau Slays Nimrod; Sells His Birthright*

Esau's ambition to get possession of Nimrod's magic garments was exceedingly great. For these garments had the amazing capacity of causing all beasts and fowl to follow the wearer and prostrate themselves before his feet. Though Nimrod was very old by that time (Nimrod and Amphrophel, King of Shinar, were the same person), yet by virtue of these same wondrous clothes he was still a "Mighty Hunter." For these, Esau was both jealous and afraid of him.

Once, Esau went a-hunting, and happened to see Nimrod, whom he recognized by the magic garments—garments upon which images of all birds and beasts were painted; but the mighty hunter was not surrounded by many followers at that particular moment. Thus, noticing the momentary isolation of Nimrod, Esau suddenly threw himself upon the old hunter, felling him

with one blow. He also killed Nimrod's two bodyguards who offered their assistance to their master. Before Nimrod's followers had the opportunity to run to the place of the murder, Esau made his escape, carrying with him the long-coveted magic garments.

Thus was Nimrod slain by the hands of a descendant of Abraham—as he had dreamed. And the years that Nimrod, son of Cush, lived, numbered two hundred and fifteen, and he was buried in Babylon (Shinar).

Very tired and out of breath, Esau ran home, and when he entered the house he found Jacob, all in tears and sad, preparing a dish of lentils.

"Why are you so sad, and why do you cook lentils, the poorest fare?" asked Esau in surprise.

Jacob sighed deeply and answered:

"Ah, my dear brother, haven't you heard of the great calamity that has befallen us? God has taken away the crown of our heads, our grandfather, Abraham!"

Upon hearing this, Esau exclaimed:

"But what does death have to do with eating lentils?"

"Because the round lentils symbolize death: as the lentils roll, so do death, sorrow and mourning roll about men, coming now to one, now to the other," explained Jacob tearfully. "And I eat this meal," continued Jacob, "as a sign of my grief

and mourning, and, that in the world to come he may love me again."

"You fool!" interrupted the hunter, "do you really think it possible that man should come to life again after he has been dead and has mouldered in the grave? The dead are dead, and the living live and want to eat. Oh, how I want to eat! . . . Do let me swallow from that red, red stew, for I am hungry and tired."

"If you don't believe in a future world, if you don't care for our grandfather's memory, if you are always busy fighting and hunting, of what avail is the birthright to you?—sell it to me!" Jacob said to his brother.

"Good," replied Esau, "of what avail *is* the birthright to me, anyway. Am I not at the point of death all the time, while hunting or fighting? Take the birthright and give me the stew!"

"Swear to me by our father's life," demanded Jacob, who knew that his brother considered nothing holy, but that his love for their father was great. "Swear to me by our father's life that you sell me the birthright and I will give you the stew."

Thereupon, Jacob gave his brother Esau bread and the stew of lentils, which he ate ravenously. And when he regained his strength, Esau mocked at Jacob and laughed at the bargain he had struck. Thus did Esau, who was also called from now on

Edom, (on account of his saying give me this *red, red* stew) despise his birthright.

3. *The Blessing of Jacob*

And it came to pass on the night which was later celebrated as Passover, that Isaac called his son, Esau, to him, and said:

"To-night the storehouses of dew are unlocked and the angels sing songs of praise to God and ask of him to grant the earth dew and rain. God hearkens to their prayers, for it is a time for favor and an hour of mercy before Him. Therefore, my son, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out into the fields and hunt game for me and prepare for me savory food such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat in order that I may bless you before I die."

Isaac's desire for dainties and savory food was due to his blindness. The sightless person cannot behold the food he eats, and in order to relish it with greater appetite, he must be tempted with food that arouses the smelling sense. And Esau already knew what kind of food he would prepare for his father. He left his father's presence to procure the food for him, no matter in what manner, by hunt, by theft or by robbery. . . . He was determined to receive his father's blessing without much delay.

But God decreed that Jacob should obtain his

father's blessing, as he was the more worthy of it. Accordingly, he sent Satan to hinder Esau on his way, and to delay him as long as possible. Esau would catch a deer and leave him lying bound, while he pursued still another. Immediately, Satan would come and liberate the deer, and when Esau returned, he would find the deer escaped. This was repeated several times; again and again he bound his game, only to have it released by Satan, so that Jacob should have time enough to carry out the plan of Rebekah, his mother, whereby he would be blessed instead of his brother Esau.

In the meantime, Rebekah, who was listening to what Isaac spoke to Esau, called her son, Jacob, and said to him:

"I just heard your father say to your brother, Esau: 'Bring me game and prepare for me savory food that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of God before I die.' Now, my son, do as I tell you: Go to the flock and bring me from there two good kids, and I will make them savory food for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall bring it to him that he may eat, so that he may bless you before he dies."

Jacob was reluctant to obey his mother and he said to her:

"Do not, mother dear, ask of me to do this thing. If my father wants to bless my brother Esau, he knows best."

"No, my son," insisted his mother, "your brother Esau is not worthy to be blessed by his father. Had your father his eyesight, he would himself know whom to bless. So, my son, do as I ask you."

"But, mother," Jacob retorted, "you know that Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, while I am smooth. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I appear to him as a deceiver. Then I shall procure my father's curses, not his blessing."

"Never mind the curses, my son. Go and do as I tell you," said Rebekah.

So Jacob went out and fetched the two kids as he was bidden, and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. Now she took the magic garments that were in Esau's possession and put them on Jacob; and on his hands and neck she put the skins of the kids, placed the food and the bread in his hands, and led him thus arrayed to the door of Isaac's chamber.

As soon as Jacob entered his father's chamber there emanated from him such a fragrance which is only possible in Paradise. Isaac started when a subdued calm voice said, "Father." The voice, together with the smell, baffled Isaac, and he said: "Here I am, who are you, son?" Thereupon in order to avoid falsehood, he answered in this manner: "It is I; your first born, Esau! I have done as you have commanded me. Arise, if you will, and sit to eat of my game, that you may bless me."

Isaac then said:

"How very quickly you have found it, my son!"

To which remark, Jacob, as was his wont, said:

"For the Lord, your God, gave me success in my game to-day."

Now Isaac was very puzzled, since it was not Esau's custom to mention God, and straightway he said to Jacob:

"Come here, my son, that I may feel you, to find out whether you are really my son, Esau, or not."

A cold sweat covered Jacob's body, terror seized him, and his heart melted like wax when he heard this. But God sent to him the two angels, Michael and Gabriel; one took him by the right hand, the other by the left, while God, Himself, put courage into his heart. Isaac felt him, and finding his hands and smooth part of the neck hairy, he said: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

Thus he did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like his brother's. Isaac ate of the food and it pleased him greatly, and the fragrance that emanated from his clothes was just like the smell of the field that God Himself blessed. So Isaac blessed his son, saying:

"See the smell of my son

Is as the smell of the field blessed by God.

May God give you dew from heaven

A share in the earth's fertile places,
And plenty of corn and wine.
Let peoples serve you
And nations bow down to you.
Be master over your brothers
And let your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be all who curse you,
And blessed be all that bless you."

4. *The Great Enmity*

As soon as Isaac had given Jacob his blessing, and Jacob was on the point of leaving his father, Esau, his brother, who had been delayed for many hours, arrived. He also had made savory food and was bringing it to his father. He was ill-humored by his lack of success of the day, and his invitation to his father sounded very harsh. "Father, get up and eat of your son's game, that you may bless me!" Esau shouted pantingly.

The words of Esau terrified Isaac greatly. His fright exceeded that which he had felt when his father was about to offer him as a sacrifice, and he cried out: "Who are you?" And when Esau answered: "I am your son, your oldest, Esau!" Isaac seemed to have seen hell gaping at Esau's feet, while he, Isaac, lay upon a pyre to which Esau was adding wood. . . .

Thereupon, with a terrified voice, Isaac continued: "Who then was he that had hunted game

and brought it to me so that I blessed him?" At this instance, Isaac was informed by God that Jacob, his son, being the worthier of the two, would continue his line and that he was also the possessor of the birthright. And he added: "Yea, he shall be blessed!"

When Esau heard the words of his father, he uttered a loud and bitter cry and said to his father: "Bless me, even me, too, my father!"

But Isaac said:

"Your brother came with wisdom and took away your blessing!"

Then Esau shouted in vexation:

"Is it not because he was named "Yakob" (Supplanter) that he has supplanted me these two times?—My birthright he took away from me, and now he has taken my blessing, also!" Weeping he continued: "But, have you not reserved a blessing for me, father?"

Isaac replied:

"My son, see, I have made him your master and all his relatives I have given to him as servants, and with grain and new wine I have furnished him the means of support. What then can I do for you, my son?"

"Is that the only blessing you have, father?" insisted Esau tearfully.

Isaac then gave Esau the following blessing:

“Behold, of the fat of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And of the dew of heaven from above.
And by your sword shall you live,
And your brother you shall serve.
But whenever you shall break loose
You shall break off his yoke from your neck.”

(Isaac implied in his blessing of Esau the thought that if Jacob's descendants would follow the right way of life, Esau's descendants would serve them, but when they would forsake God's ways, they would serve Esau's descendants.)

Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing of their father. And he said to himself: “As soon as the mourning days for my father will approach—I will kill my brother, Jacob.”

5. Jacob Leaves His Home

When the words of her older son were reported to Rebekah, she sent for her younger son, Jacob, and said to him:

“Your brother Esau is going to take vengeance on you by killing you. Now, therefore, my son, listen to me: flee to my brother, Laban, at Haran, and stay with him for a time until your brother's anger is averted and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you back.”

Rebekah also spoke to Isaac, her husband, saying:

"If Jacob take to himself a wife of the daughters of Heth, what good shall my life be to me?"

Accordingly, Isaac sent for Jacob and when he came to him, he charged him, saying to him:

"My son, you shall not take to yourself a wife of the daughters of Canaan, for thus did our father, Abraham, command us according to the word of God, which He had commanded him saying: 'To your children will I give this land, if they keep my covenant that I have made with you.' Now, therefore, my son, hearken to my voice. Refrain from taking a wife from amongst the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Haran, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take for you a wife from there of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. Take heed lest you should forget the Lord your God and all His ways in the land to which you go, and should join yourself to the people of the land, and forsake the Lord, your God. But when you come to that land, serve God. Do not turn to the right or to the left from the way which I commanded you, and which you did learn. May the Almighty God grant you favor before the people of that land that you may take there a wife according to your choice; one who is good and upright in the way of God. And may God give to you and your children the blessing

of your grandfather Abraham and make you fruitful and multiply you, and may He cause you to return to your land, the land of your father's dwelling, with children and with great riches, with joy and with pleasure."

And when Isaac finished charging his son, he gave him as many presents of gold and of silver as he could carry. Rebekah, his mother, embraced and kissed Jacob, and said:

"May God send his angels to keep you on your way." Jacob, thereupon, kissed his father and mother, and departed from them, to go to the land of Haran.

CHAPTER XIV

JACOB'S JOURNEY

I. *Jacob Pursued by Esau's Son, Eliphaz*

WHEN Jacob went away to go to Haran, Esau called his son Eliphaz, his first-born, and secretly spoke to him:

"Now, hurry, take your sword in your hand and pursue your Uncle Jacob. Pass before him in the road, and lurk for him in one of the mountains and slay him with your sword, take away all that he has with him, and come back."

Eliphaz was very skilful and expert with the bow, for his father had taught him that, and he, too, became a dexterous hunter in the field and a valiant man in general. So Eliphaz took with him ten men and pursued Jacob. He followed Jacob closely, and when he overtook him, he lay in ambush for him on the borders of the land of Canaan, opposite the city of Shechem. When Jacob saw Eliphaz and his men pursuing him, he stopped going, and stayed there to find out what it was all about. Eliphaz drew his sword and advanced toward Jacob, who said to him:

"Why did you pursue me, and why have you come hither?"

"In order to fulfil my father's command," answered Eliphaz, "and in order to slay you, to frustrate your father's blessing, which you have procured by trickery."

Upon hearing these words, and knowing that Esau had commanded his son in this matter, Jacob began to supplicate his young nephew with the following:

"Behold, all that I have, and that which my father and mother gave me, take from me and do not kill me, and may this thing that you will do with me be accounted to you as a righteous deed."

And the Lord caused Jacob to find favor in the sight of Eliphaz, son of Esau, and his men, and they hearkened to the voice of Jacob, and did not put him to death. They did, to be sure, take all his belongings, together with the gold and silver that he had brought with him from Beersheba. When Eliphaz and his men returned to Esau, and told him all that had happened, he was very angry, because they had not put Jacob to death. And they answered, saying: "Because Jacob supplicated us in this matter, not to slay him, we were moved to pity him, so we let him live, but took away all his belongings and came back." Esau, then, took all the silver and gold which Eliphaz had taken

from Jacob and he placed them in his own house.

2. *A Wondrous Day*

And it came to pass that when Eliphaz was a good way off from Jacob, that Jacob offered the following prayer to God:

"O, God, to Thee I lift up mine eyes! Help me in my need and troubles. When Eliezer, my grandfather's servant, had gone to Haran, he had with him camels, silver and gold, but I am indigent and a pauper. Who will befriend me? . . ."

Ere he made an end of his despairing prayer, God appeared to him and said:

"Lift up your eyes heavenward and behold the twelve bright stars which spread their beautiful light in the sky. Know you, that this shows that you will be father of twelve sons. Your name will become immortal."

As Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw the twelve bright stars, he wondered greatly and said:

"How did this thing happen, that I should see stars during the day? Surely, God began to show me his wonders and his miracles of which my parents told me."

While wondering at this strange sight, he looked around, and behold, he was standing already upon Mount Moriah. . . . "How," thought Jacob in great amazement, "could I make a two days'

journey in but a few hours?" And as Jacob did not intend to pause on that holy hill, Moriah, God caused evening to descend on earth many hours before it was due. For it was the Divine purpose to let Jacob stay there at least one night on the hallowed Mount to reveal to him the future of his sons.

Night fell soon, and Jacob decided to spend it there. He took twelve stones from the altar on which his father had lain bound as a sacrifice and he said:

"It was the purpose of God to let twelve tribes arise, but they have not been begotten by Abraham or by Isaac. If, now, these twelve separate stones will unite into a single one, then I shall know for a certainty that I am destined to become the father of the twelve tribes."

Now another miracle took place: The twelve stones joined together and became one. He put it under his head, and the stone immediately became as soft and as downy as a pillow. (This union of stones also took place to appease the quarrel that broke between the stones; each stone wanted to have the head of Jacob upon it.) God also folded together the whole of the Holy Land and put it under Jacob. He fell asleep in that wondrous place, on that miraculous night—a night in which Jacob had his first prophetic dream.

3. *The Vision*

And Jacob dreamed:

A ladder was set up on the earth, its top reached heaven. On that ladder, angels were ascending and descending. Four angels bearing the visage of humans began to ascend the ladder. The forehead of the first was marked "Babylon." The next—Media; then Javan (Greece); finally Edom (Rome). The Angel of Babylon mounted seventy steps; the angel of Media—fifty-two; the angel of Javan, one hundred and eighty, but that of Edom mounted and mounted endlessly. . . .

The three other angels called to the angel of Edom, saying: "Come, let us unite against Jacob and we shall exterminate him!" But at this moment the heavens rent and an infinite light shone over the world, and God Himself appeared to Jacob in all His splendor and glory. The four angels disappeared, and God's voice was saying to Jacob: "Fear not, Jacob, My servant. I will be with you and will keep you wherever you go!"

And Jacob said: "Who were those four angels I saw mounting up on the ladder?" To which the Eternal answered: "They were the four kingdoms who would rule over your children in the time to come. . . ." Then Jacob said: "Woe! I saw the first three angels ascending certain steps, and descending, save for the last one. Will he for-

ever subjugate my descendants?" God replied: "Though he mount on high as the eagle, and though his nest be set among the stars, I will bring him down from thence."

At that time did God fold together the whole of the Holy Land and place it under Jacob and said to him: "The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants." And He continued: "Your descendants will be like unto the dust of the earth. As the earth survives all things, so will your children survive all the nations of the earth. But as the earth is trodden by all, so will your children, when they sin against Me, be trodden upon by the nations of the earth. . . ."

And he awoke.

The first words Jacob could utter were: "How awesome this place is, this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. Surely, God is in this place, and I knew it not!"

Jacob took the stone made out of the twelve, and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. (The oil had flowed from heaven for this purpose.) God made this anointed stone to sink to the abyss, to serve as the center of the earth, and as the center of the future sanctuary, that stone became the *Even shethiyah*, or the *Foundation stone*.

Jacob also cast himself down before the *Even*

shethiyah, and prayed to God to fulfil the promise He had given him, and above all to give him his daily sustenance. He vowed to give a tenth of all he owned to God, that is, he would give it to the needy and poor.

He ended his prayer and set out for Haran. In the twinkling of an eye he arrived at his destination, since the earth, miraculously, jumped from Mount Moriah to Haran. This was the last miracle to happen to Jacob on his journey.

CHAPTER XV

JACOB IN A STRANGE LAND

1. *Jacob Arrives at His Destination*

WHEN Jacob so miraculously arrived outside of Haran, the first thing to catch his eye there was the well, from which the inhabitants drew their supply of water. Three flocks of sheep were lying down near the well, and their shepherds were standing by idly, and did not stir to roll the large stone, covering the mouth of the well. (They used to wait until all shepherds gathered, in order to remove that stone.) Jacob approached the strangers and amiably asked them:

"Where are you from, brothers?"

"We are from Haran," they replied.

"Do you know Laban, son of Bethuel?"

"Indeed, we do," the shepherds from Haran answered.

Jacob further inquired:

"Is all well with him?"

"All is well," replied the shepherds, "soon, Rachel, Laban's daughter, will come with her father's sheep," they continued.

It seemed strange to Jacob to see so many shepherds idling—so he said to them:

“See, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together, water the sheep and feed them.”

Good-naturedly, the shepherds explained to the stranger:

“We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and all the shepherds roll the stone from the well’s mouth; then we will water the sheep.”

As they were thus conversing, Rachel was approaching with her father’s sheep. (Laban had no sons as yet, and a pestilence having broken out shortly before among his cattle, so few were left that a girl like Rachel could easily take care of them.) Now, as Jacob saw the daughter of his mother’s brother approaching, he was immediately filled with strength that he himself rolled the great stone from the well’s mouth, with such ease as one exerts when drawing a cork out of a bottle. The shepherds were amazed at the great strength exhibited by Jacob. Then when Rachel came near the well, Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud.

As soon as Rachel heard that Jacob was her cousin, she left the flock with Jacob, and herself ran home to tell her father about his coming.

2. *The Cunning Laban; Jacob’s Marriage*

Laban remembered the day when Eliezer came

to look for a wife for Abraham's son, how richly laden were his ten camels, and how great was the wealth of his uncle's bondman. "More so," thought he, "would the richest of the family's favorite be." But how disappointed did he become when he hastily ran to meet Jacob, only to find him alone without servants or camels. Laban concluded that he carried great sums of money in his garment's pockets. So he threw his arms about his waist to find out whether his thought would prove true. Finding nothing on him while embracing him, he did not give up hope. "Surely he must have concealed some precious stones in his mouth," thought Laban, while he kissed his nephew with that idea in mind. When he discovered that his nephew stood before him empty-handed, he became very sad, and Jacob's poverty filled him with dismay. Jacob told him all that happened to him on the journey, how rich he left his father's house, and how Eliphaz robbed him of all he had.

Besides being disappointed with Jacob's condition, Laban begrudged him the food that he would have to give Jacob for some time.

He said to him:

"You stand before me as a bone whose meat was removed. But nevertheless, come to my house."

Laban intended to send away Jacob from him, but when he consulted his teraphim he was told

that the blessing of God would return to his house with Jacob's stay.

But Laban was both cunning and hypocritical. He came to Jacob and said to him:

"Should you serve me for nothing just because you are related to me? Tell me what shall your wages be."

Now, Laban had two daughters: The name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Rachel was the more beautiful of the two, since Leah's eyes were weak. (That was caused by the fact that it was agreed by letter between her father and his sister Rebekah, to have her older son marry his older daughter, and the younger daughter marry her younger son. Having inquired about her future husband, she found him out to be of villainous character, so she wept over her fate until her eyelashes dropped from their lids.)

Jacob loved Rachel, and he therefore said to her father:

"I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

Laban agreed to the pact, saying:

"It is better for me to give her to you than to give her to any other man."

So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because he loved her so.

Laban, however, was scheming something else. He wanted to marry off his older daughter, Leah, first, for he knew that Jacob would consent to serve him another seven years' period for love of Rachel. Accordingly, when the seven years of Jacob's service were about to end, Laban assembled his townsfolk and addressed them thus:

"My brothers, you well know how we used to suffer from lack of water, and as soon as this pious man, Jacob, my sister's son, came to dwell with us, God blessed us and we have had plenty of water. Now if he marries Rachel, for whom he worked seven years, as he intends, he will take her and go back to his father's land. Then will return to us the evil conditions of former times."

"What have you in mind to do?" asked him the assemblage.

Laban continued:

"If you really want my nephew, Jacob, to tarry here many more years, I shall give him Leah in marriage instead of Rachel. But each one of you must give me a pledge, of silver or of gold, that you will not betray my secret to Jacob."

The people, thereupon gave Laban pledges of gold and of silver and departed from him with the promise to participate in the wedding ceremony he was preparing, and that they would not reveal his secret.

Laban arranged a great wedding feast, for he

took all the pledges left with him and bought with them wine, oil and meat and all things necessary to make a feast rich. The wedding feast lasted all day long. The bride near him being veiled was Leah and not Rachel, his love. And the townsfolk thought: "This man's piety and goodness brought a great service to us. Our supply of water was increased and our fields yielded much grain, our flocks multiplied. God's blessing was with us. Now, Laban is about to deceive him. Let us hint the matter to him!" So, as their hearts became merry with wine they began to dance around Jacob and his bride, singing and shouting: *Ha Lia, Ha Lia!* (This is Leah, this is Leah!) But Jacob, who was unsuspecting did not understand their hint.

When morning came, Jacob finding out that it was Leah who was given him in marriage, he became angry and said:

"Why have you deceived me? Have I not served you for Rachel?"

"It is not customary among us to marry off the younger before the older," calmly answered Laban. "Let this wedding-week be fulfilled, and we will give you the other girl, too, for the service which you will render me seven more years. . . ."

While they were talking, the townspeople came to take back their pledges. Laban told them what he did with them. The people became exceedingly angry with him and said: "Indeed, your name

is to be no longer Laban, son of Bethuel, but Laban Arami, for you are a Ramai (deceiver). You deceived your kinsman and also us, your townsfolk."

3. *God Blesses Jacob*

When God saw that Leah was not as beloved as Rachel, he blessed Leah with the gift of motherhood, but Rachel remained childless. Four sons were born to Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Rachel, who as yet did not give birth to children, was envious of her sister. She therefore gave her maid-servant to Jacob as a wife. Now Bilhah, Rachel's maid-servant, gave birth to two sons, whom Rachel named Dan and Naphtali. Leah, who gave birth to no more children, gave her maid-servant to Jacob as wife. And her maid-servant, Zilpah, too, bore to Jacob two sons and Leah named the one Gad, and the other Asher.

Then did God remember Rachel and her cry and granted her wish. She gave birth to a son and said: "God has taken away my disgrace." She named him Joseph (May He add,) that is to say, God will add to me another son.

Now that Jacob's wives bore to him eleven sons (besides one daughter, Dinah, that Leah gave birth to) while he was completing fourteen years of service for Laban, Rebekah his mother sent her nurse, Deborah, daughter of Uz, and two servants

to ask Jacob to return to his father's land. About this time, Esau, his wives, sons, and all belonging to him, went and took possession of the land of Seir, and Rebekah fulfilled her promise to Jacob, that she would send to fetch him from Haran.

Accordingly, Jacob came to his father-in-law, Laban, and said to him:

"Now, it is time for me to go to my own land, and to my own place. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go."

Laban replied to his son-in-law:

"If now you will do me this favor, I have inquired of my teraphim and I was told that God has blessed me for your sake. Fix for me your wages and I will pay them."

But Jacob, who did not want to stay any longer with his father-in-law, answered:

"You know how I have served you, and what your cattle have become under my charge. For you had little before I came, but since, it has greatly increased. But now the time has come that I should provide for my own family also!"

Laban insisted that Jacob stay on and fix his wages. And Jacob said:

"If you will give me as my wages, all the speckled and spotted ones among goats and brown among the sheep, I will consent to stay with you."

They agreed. Jacob stayed with Laban for six more years, during which time he tried to deceive Jacob not once. But God was with Jacob and helped him. He grew very rich for most of the sheep born were brown and most of the goats were speckled and spotted.

Thus Jacob became exceedingly wealthy; he had large flocks and many male and female slaves and camels and asses.

4. *Jacob Leaves Laban*

It came to pass at that time that Jacob noticed that the attitude of Laban and his sons toward him was no longer as friendly as it used to be. He, moreover, overheard Laban's sons saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from that which was our father's he has acquired all his wealth!" And at that time, when twenty years since Jacob left his home, have expired, God has appeared to Jacob and said to him: "Return to your land, to the land of your fathers and I will be with you."

Jacob knew well enough that Laban would not allow him to go, so he sent his son Naphtali, the swift messenger, to summon Rachel and Leah to him in the field for a consultation. When they came to him, Jacob said to his wives:

"I see that your father's attitude changed entirely toward me. You know that with all my

strength I served your father, but your father has deceived me, changing my very wages ten times. Now the God of my fathers appeared to me and said: 'Jacob, I am the God of Bethel where you have anointed that pillar. I will be with you and will keep my promise to you. Return to your land and I will be with you.' "

"Whatever God said we are ready to do!" answered Rachel and Leah and continued: "Do we have any inheritance or portion at our father's? He has sold us, hasn't he, and he has even eaten up our money. . . . For all the riches which God has taken away from our father's, that is ours and our children's. Do whatever you decide."

Accordingly, when Laban went away to shear his sheep, Jacob made ready to depart. And in order that Laban might not learn from his teraphim their whereabouts, Rachel stole them and she took them and concealed them in the camel's saddle, upon which she sat. Rachel believed that if she would steal her father's idols, he might, perhaps, stop worshiping them. (Now, this was the way they used to worship the teraphim: they took a man who was first born, slew him, cut off the hair of his head, salted his head, and anointed it with oil. Then they wrote "The name"¹—upon a small tablet of copper or gold, and placed it

¹ Of an impure spirit.

under his tongue. The head with the inscribed tablet under the tongue, was then placed in a house where lights were kindled before it. When they bowed down before it, it spoke to them on all matters they asked of it. That was due to the power of the *name* inscribed on it. Some made them in the figures of men of gold and silver and went to them at appointed times. These, they believed, received the influence of the stars, and told them things of the future. Such were the images or teraphim that Rachel stole.)

When Jacob got ready to go, he took his wives and his children and all his flock and set out for the land of Canaan. Crossing the Euphrates river, he set his face toward Gilead. Meantime the shepherds of Haran observed that the well, which had been so overabundant during Jacob's stay there, had suddenly run dry. . . . They waited for three days and three nights, in the hope that the waters would return in the same abundance as before. When Laban was told of his misfortune he divined at once the cause and he hastened home to inquire from his teraphim the whereabouts of his son-in-law, only to find them gone.

On the next day Laban rose early, assembled all the people of the city and pursued Jacob with the intention of killing him. And after a seven days' journey, he overtook Jacob on the mountain of Gilead.

Laban wanted to kill Jacob and take back his wives and their children and all his property. And an angel, Shaphtiel by name, appeared before God saying:

"Have no mercy upon Jacob because he sinned against Thee! He left his father and mother for twenty years and did not serve them as it befits a man to serve his parents."

But Righteousness and Mercy appeared before God and said:

"Let Thy pity be shown to Jacob, O, God, for the sake of the righteousness of his father Isaac and grandfather, Abraham."

"Nay," insisted Shaphtiel, "Judge of the whole Universe! Six years ago Rebekah had sent to call Isaac back home and he did not hearken unto her voice, instead he remained with Laban in order to amass more wealth. Nay, have no mercy on him."

Righteousness and Mercy held their peace, but Work came and presenting himself before God said:

"For twenty long years Jacob served Laban with all his might. He suffered heat by day and cold by night. Sleep fled from his eyes, as he kept watching the sheep entrusted to him by his father-in-law, as one watches the apple of his eye. Departing from Laban he took nothing that did not

belong to him. Wherefore, then, O God, should he be killed?"

Shaphtiel then had nothing more to say, and God sent Archangel Michael to Laban who warned him thus: "Take care not to speak to Jacob bad or good! God has seen Jacob's affliction and the labor of his hands. Beware from doing any evil to him."

When Laban overtook Jacob he only said to him:

"What have you done to me? Why did you flee from me and carry away my daughters as captives of the sword? You did not give me a chance even to say farewell to my sons and daughters. Had you told me that you were going, I might have sent you away with merriment and song, with music and dancing. Now you have indeed done foolishly. I could if I wanted, do you harm, but the God of your fathers spoke to me last night, saying: "Take care lest you speak to Jacob either good or bad." But, you went away in such a hurry since you wanted badly to return home, but why have you stolen my gods?"

Jacob answered:

"I was afraid you would take away your daughters from me—that is why I ran away; and as for your gods, with whomsoever you will find your gods, he shall die."

Jacob did not know that Rachel stole the idols

of her father, and with these words of Jacob, unwittingly Rachel was cursed—(that is why Rachel died when giving birth to Benjamin, the twelfth son of Jacob.)

So after Laban searched through Jacob's tents and did not find his images, the two men made a treaty of peace. They took stones and made thereof a heap, and Laban said: "Let this be a witness between me and you." That is why they named the place Gilead. (Heap of testimony.)

Early in the morning after the day of the covenanting with Jacob, Laban rose, kissed his grandchildren and daughters and blessed them. Laban departed and returned to his place. Jacob went on his way and angels of God met him. Jacob said, when he saw them: "This is God's host"—hence the place was called Mahanaim.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RETURN OF JACOB

1. *Laban's Plot*

THOUGH Laban made a treaty of peace with Jacob, nevertheless when he returned home, he sent his son Beor and ten companions to Esau his nephew, at Seir, with the following message:

“To Esau from Laban, Greetings:

“Have you heard what Jacob, your brother, has done to me, your uncle Laban? He came to me empty-handed, naked and barefooted. I hastened to receive him, clothed and sheltered him. My two daughters, Leah and Rachel, I gave him for wives, and also two of my maid-servants. And because God blessed him on my account he increased abundantly, had sons and daughters and men-servants and maid-servants and no mean stock of herds and flocks, besides much gold and silver. The man is very wealthy. But when he saw that he became rich, he left me while I was away, shearing my flock. He simply

rose, took his wives, his children, all his possessions and fled away secretly from me. He did not even suffer me to kiss my daughters and grandchildren before they left. He carried them away as if he would capture them by sword. My gods, too, he stole. Now he is on his way to Canaan, his father's land. I left him in the mountains near the brook of Jabbok. You can find him there, as I am certain you like to see him. . . ."

The message of Laban awakened Esau's old hatred toward Jacob with increased fury. He, then, called together his household, sixty men in number, and three hundred and fifty men of Seir and went forth to fight with Jacob.

Laban's messengers also went to Rebekah, and told her: "Esau is going to meet Jacob, he has four hundred men with him." Rebekah hurriedly dispatched seventy-two men of her own household, to give him help. When Jacob recognized his father's retainers, he rejoiced seeing them, and inquired as to the welfare of his father and mother. After that, the warriors sent by Rebekah, delivered her message to her son:

"I have heard, my son, that your brother Esau has gone forth against you on the way with men of the children of Seir, the Horite. Now, my son, I sent my people to help you if need be. But you

better try to supplicate Esau to make peace with you. Why should I be bereaved of both of you in one day?—Tell your brother everything concerning you; give him a goodly gift from what you possess, and perhaps he will make peace with you, since he is now lord of the land of Seir.”

Jacob cried bitterly at his mother’s words, but decided to do accordingly.

2. *Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau*

At Jabbok, Jacob was met by one hundred and twenty myriads of angels. From these, Jacob chose as many as pleased them and he sent them as messengers to his brother, Esau, with the following message:

“Thus speaks your servant, Jacob: My Lord: Think not that the blessing which our father bestowed upon me has profited me. Twenty years I served Laban and he deceived me, changing my wages ten times. . . . I labored for him with honesty and sincerity. God saw my affliction, my labor, the work of my hands, and through His kindness and mercy I acquired oxen, cattle, men-servants and maid-servants. Now I am coming to my own country and to my home, to my parents in Canaan. I send these messengers to tell you, my lord, of this in order that I may win your favor. Cease from your anger, O brother! What have I from my father’s blessing that you have not?—Is the

sun shining in *my* land and not in *yours*? Are dew and rain falling in *my* land and not in *yours*? Our father blessed me with the dew of the heaven, so he blessed you with the fatness of the earth; he spoke to me: 'Peoples shall serve you,' so he promised you: 'By your sword shall you live!' How long, then, will you continue your anger, brother, and be envious of me? Come, now, let us make peace."

In reply to these gentle words Esau answered with great arrogance:

"To Jacob, the supplanter, these words from Esau: Surely, I have heard and it was told to me all you have done to Laban, our uncle, who brought you up in his house and gave you his daughters for wives, (even Leah, who was intended for me), and you begot sons and daughters and increased greatly in wealth and riches in Laban's house, through his help. Now, when you saw that your wealth increased, you fled away from him secretly, carrying away his daughters with you, as if you made them captives by sword. Yea, you have dealt with your benefactor as you have dealt with me. Twice you have supplanted me, and many times you have supplanted and deceived him, Laban, our uncle. Can I be silent? No, Jacob, I come to meet you. We shall fight it out. . . ."

At this message Jacob became greatly alarmed

and distressed. He was afraid lest he be killed and he was distressed lest he would be obliged to kill. . . . So he decided to revert to three means: To the help of a present, with which he might appease Esau's anger, to prayer—pray for God's intervention in helping him avoid war, and he also prepared if need be, for war. . . .

Jacob, accordingly prepared gifts for his brother: Two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty asses and ten young donkeys. That present he despatched before him, led by his messengers. And himself he stood and offered God the following prayer:

“O, Thou God of my father, Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac, God of all who walk in the ways of the righteous and follow them! I am indeed not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shown unto Thy servant: for only with my staff I passed over the Jordan, and now I have become wealthy, because Thou hast kept Thy promise to me. O Lord of the world! As Thou didst come to my help and save me from the hands of Laban, so bring also to naught Esau's evil designs against me. And Thou O Lord, didst promise me to make me father and founder of a great race. Deliver me then from the hands of my brother, Esau, for

I fear that he will come and attack me, mother and children."

Such was the prayer of Jacob, and God did look upon the tears that Jacob had shed and he hearkened unto his prayer and accepted it. And Jacob divided all that went with him into two companies. He set over one company as leader Damesek, son of Eliezer, bondman of Abraham, and over the other company he set Alinus, son of Eliezer. He asked them to arrange the companies so as to give a large space between one and the other. "For," he thought, "if Esau comes to one company and attacks it, then the other company can escape."

3. *Jacob's Wrestle With an Angel*

The messengers who bore Jacob's present to his brother, passed before him, and he slept for a short time in the camp together with all his men. In the middle of the night he rose and took across the ford Jabbok, his wives and his children. Next he forded his flock and all belonging to him. Jacob, reminded that he forgot some pots on the other side, went back again to take them, for he said: "My men worked enough to-night, so let me do this work myself."

As Jacob was about to cross the ford at Jabbok for the last time, he noticed a shepherd, who like-

wise had sheep and camels. The stranger approached Jacob and said to him:

"I am a shepherd and I worked hard to-day, do me this favor and help carry my flock across the stream, and I will carry your pots across."

When Jacob consented, the shepherd took hold of his vessels which in a twinkle of an eye were transferred to the other side of the ford. Then Jacob began to move the stranger's flock. But, lo! no matter how many he took over to the other side, there always remained a like number on the opposite bank. There was no end to the cattle of the shepherd, and though Jacob labored all night through, the cattle seemed to be forever increasing. At least, when his patience was nearly spent, Jacob shouted to the shepherd:

"You wizard! Cease your witchcraft. . . ."

"Soon you will see whether I am a wizard or not," answered the shepherd. And while talking, he touched the earth with his finger. It quaked and trembled and fire burst forth, catching all around. But Jacob calmly said:

"What! Would you frighten me by fire—me, who am wholly made of fire, for God had said: 'Jacob's house shall be a fire and a flame!' Go away, touch me not."

This shepherd was no other than Sammaël, guardian angel of Esau, and he revealed himself as such to Jacob and began to wrestle with him.

They wrestled long, until dawn made its appearance in the plain. The angel, seeing that he did not prevail against him, wanted to inflict on his opponent a dangerous wound. But Sammaël only succeeded in touching the hollow of his thigh, injuring him slightly, as it was dislocated. Jacob, however, took hold of him and did not let go. So the angel began to beg Jacob to let him go, as dawn came already. But Jacob said to him:

"Are you a thief, a murderer, or a gambler who is afraid of the coming of the day?"

Then Sammaël replied:

"At dawn, all angels appear before God to sing to Him, and I have to participate in the dawn service. Please send me away."

Jacob said:

"No, I will not send you away except you bless me. When the angels appeared to my grandfather, Abraham, they, too, blessed him."

"That was different," said Sammaël. "Those angels were sent for the purpose of blessing Abraham, while I—I was not sent to bless you."

At this moment a heavenly host of myriads of angels appeared, calling the angel thus: "Hurry, hurry, singing time has reached." But as Jacob did not let the angel go, he sang right there on earth and his voice ascended heavenward and mingled with the voices of the angels. Jacob heard the beautiful melody and his soul revived. . . .

But God rebuked the angel saying:

"You did the wrong thing to put a blemish in Jacob who is priest to Me."

"There are many heavenly priests who serve Thee, O God," said the angel.

"On earth, however, there is no other pious man, who is worthy of this priesthood, than Jacob, My servant," answered God.

Accordingly, the angel called Raphael, and begged him to heal Jacob of the wound he inflicted upon him. Raphael did so.

And Esau's guardian angel was still held by Jacob; and he pleaded with him to let him go, but Jacob said: "I will not let you go unless you bless me!"

Then said the angel:

"May God grant that your children shall be as pious, as righteous and as good as you are."

"But will you not reveal to me what will happen to me in the future?"

"How can I betray a heavenly secret? The two angels who have revealed their mission to Lot—about the destruction of Sodom—were banished from God's presence for one hundred and thirty-eight years. . . ."

But as Jacob insisted, the angel said to him:

"A day will come when God Himself will appear to you at Bethel, and He will bless you and will change your name. No longer will your name

be Jacob but Israel (striver with God). For you, though born of a woman, did enter the heavenly palace and did escape from there with your life."

4. *End of the Feud*

When day broke forth, Jacob let the angel go, after he blessed him and prophesied to him. And when the sun shone, his dislocated hip was wholly healed by the force of its rays. (Nevertheless Jacob's children took upon themselves not to eat the hip muscle which is upon the socket of the thigh of all eatable animals and cattle. They blamed themselves for their father's mishap, in letting him ford alone the brook, Jabbok.)

Although Jacob prepared himself for the worst, even for open war, yet when he looked up and saw Esau coming with the four hundred men, he was very much affrighted. He then made separate divisions of his household. He put the slave-wives and their children in front, Leah and her children next, (he put Dinah in a chest—lest his brother Esau desire her for a wife), and Rachel and Joseph in the rear.

Jacob did not know what happened to his brother on the way. God sent down four angels and they went before Esau. They appeared unto Esau and his people as four thousand myriads of men riding upon horses. These were furnished with all kinds of weapons, and divided into four

divisions. Each division of one thousand myriads. . . . The first division went and they found Esau coming with four hundred men. Esau saw the multitude and affrighted he asked: "To whom do you belong?" "To Jacob," came the reply. Esau fell off his horse in great terror, and his people dispersed; and all the while the men were shouting: "Give it to him! Beat him!" And Esau shouted to the men: "Oh, you belong to Jacob, my lord and brother whom I did not see these twenty years. It is now that I am on my way to see him." The men answered: "As God lives, if Jacob were not your brother, we would have not left one person of yours alive." This division passed from Esau, the second division came toward him, and they, too, did to Esau and his people as the first had done. When this division allowed him to go on, the third came, and when the third division of one thousand myriads of men had passed the fourth came toward Esau, and did like the first division. Esau continued his journey much afraid of his brother, and not only did he want to reconcile with his brother but was afraid lest he perish should he want to touch Jacob.

As Jacob saw Esau approaching he went toward him and bowed to the ground seven times. When Esau saw his brother who acted as if he were afraid of him, his old hatred came back to him, and though he was afraid to slay Jacob by

sword or bow, remembering what happened on the road, he decided that he would bite him to death with his mouth. . . . But he was doomed to utter and bitter disappointment. As he fell on his neck while embracing his brother, Esau tried to bite his throat, but immediately Jacob's neck turned to ivory. He nearly broke all his teeth and the two brothers wept. But Esau wept more for his aching teeth than because of the meeting.

Esau said to his brother, as soon as his pain had subsided somewhat:

"Tell me, brother, what was the army I met?"

But Jacob did not know what happened to his brother, and thought he meant the company he had sent in advance with his presents, so he answered:

"I sent you that company to find favor in your eyes. . . ."

And Esau said:

"Do not send me any more gifts like those. I was nearly killed by those men, had I not told that you were my brother."

But Jacob insisted:

"If now I won your favor, receive my presents. For I look upon your face as I look on the face of God. You have regarded me favorably, and I have enough, Brother. God gave me plenty."

Upon hearing Jacob's words, Esau became frightened again: "Who can withstand him, when

he sees God face to face," thought he, and took his presents lest he incur his anger. And besides, the presents which Jacob gave to Esau he also gave him a large sum of money for the Cave of Machpelah. Jacob gave him a heap of gold for it. He said to him: "What do you prefer, the Cave or the pile of gold?" And Esau returned, "I want gold!"

When Esau got ready to go home, he looked around and saw that none of his four hundred men, save his sons were with him. "Where are the Seirites?" he asked of his sons. "They fled away out of fear for Jacob," they answered him. So, Esau separated himself from his brother, and returned to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Shechem and spread his tent outside of that city. He bought a parcel of field, where he had spread his tent, of the children of Hamor, father of Shechem, for one hundred *kesitah*. God blessed Jacob, his cattle was not diminished and his gold was not decreased. He reviewed all the good things he had learned before he left his father's house, and lo! he remembered all. . . .

5. *Israel, Father of Twelve Sons*

And God said to Jacob:

"Arise, go to Bethel, stay there and build an altar to God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau."

Jacob did so.

God blessed Jacob and said to him:

"Your name Jacob shall be changed into Israel. I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to you I will give it and to your descendants."

And when they set out from Bethel and were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel felt the pains of childbirth. When she was suffering intensely, the attendant said to her: "Fear not, for now you will have another son." But as her life was departing (for she was dying) she called his name Benoni (son of my sorrow) but his father called him Benjamin (son of days, son of my old age). So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is Bethlehem) and Jacob set up a monument over her grave, that is Rachel's monument, which stands until this day.

And Jacob's sorrow was increased, for at that time, his mother, Rebekah, also died, and Jacob mourned the death of his wife and mother for many days.

CHAPTER XVII

JOSEPH, FAVORITE SON OF JACOB

1. *The Dreamer*

AFTER the many hardships that had beset the path of Jacob, he thought he would be at rest at last, but the loss of Joseph had inflicted upon him the greatest suffering. And this is the story of Joseph.

Of all the sons of Jacob, Joseph was the one that resembled him most closely. He was the one to whom Jacob transmitted all the knowledge he had received from his teachers, Shem and Eber. Being the son of his beloved Rachel, and born in his old age, he loved Joseph more than the rest of his sons, and as a token of his love, he made him a coat of many colors. The coat was so light and delicate that it could be folded and put in the palm of the hand. The main reason, however, for Jacob's discrimination toward Joseph was that the beauty of his person reminded him of his dear wife, Rachel, prematurely dead. Bilhah, Rachel's maid-servant, reared and mothered Joseph after her death, and therefore Joseph was

fond of her sons, Dan and Naphtali, whereas Leah's sons held themselves aloof from the sons of the slave-wives. The brothers began to be jealous of Joseph, and jealousy soon brought hatred with it. Joseph, moreover, increased this feeling of hatred by bearing tales against his brothers: he used to bring evil reports about their conduct to Jacob.

Once Joseph had a dream and he told it to his brothers.

"Hear, I beg of you," Joseph said to them, "this dream which I have had: We were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo! my sheaf arose and stood upright, while your sheaves came around and bowed down to my sheaf."

Their enmity increasing, his brothers shouted to him:

"What! Are you so presumptuous as to have vain thoughts of ruling over us? Surely one is shown in dreams what he thinks while he is awake!" said the brothers, and they hated him more, both because of his talebearing and because of his dreams.

Again Joseph had a dream which he told first to his father. He dreamed that the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. Jacob at once believed in the prophetic meaning of the dream. The sun meant Jacob, the stars, the eleven sons, but he was puzzled as to the moon—yet that stood for Bilhah who was like a mother to Joseph.

He knew of the truth of the prophecy, believed in it and hoped for its realization. But when Joseph repeated this dream to his brothers in his father's presence, Jacob reproved him and said: "What is this dream that you have dreamt? Shall I, your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" Jacob said these words to lessen the impression of the dream on the brothers, while he himself kept the dream. Still the brothers were more envious of Joseph, and their hatred toward him increased.

2. *On a Dangerous Mission*

Once, the brothers of Joseph led their father's flocks to the pastures of Shechem, and they stayed away too long; no tidings having come from them since they had left. Jacob became anxious about his sons, and feared that another war had broken out between his sons and the people of Shechem. (For once a war was waged between them because of Dinah, Leah's daughter, whom Shechem, son of Hamor, took for a wife by force. At that time the Israelites were victorious.) Jacob, thereupon called his son, Joseph, to him and said thus:

"My son, I have had a dream about which I am very uneasy. I saw in my dream that I and your brothers were being led by force to Egypt. Looking up I saw an angel of God standing near me and I asked of him: "Will I return to my native

land?" The angel replied: "You shall die there!" I awoke and shuddered. I thought perhaps my surrounding enemies had united against my tribe, to do me great harm. But as I was thinking for an interpretation, lo! I reminded: God had said to our father, Abraham "Your descendants shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them." So I thought perhaps that exile began already. So now, therefore, my son, go and see whether all is well with your brothers and bring me back the report."

And though Joseph knew how intensely his brothers hated him, his filial love overcame his fear and he straightway said to his father.

"I am ready, father!"

Immediately he sent him out of the valley of Hebron to go to Shechem. Not finding his brothers and the flock in Shechem, he began to wander around the fields and pasture places near Shechem. He went and went until he lost his way. Then Gabriel in human shape appeared before him and asked him: "Whom are you looking for?" To which Joseph replied: "I am looking for my brothers. Tell me, I beg of you, where they are pasturing the flock?" Then said Gabriel: "They have gone away, for I heard them say: 'Let us go to Dothan!'" And, thus directed by the angel, Joseph was on his way to Dothan.

While Joseph was quite a way off from Dothan,

his brothers saw him coming and they conspired against him to do away with him. One said to the other: "See, here comes the dreamer! Come on, brothers, let us kill him and throw his body in one of the pits, and then we will say: 'a fierce beast has devoured him.' And we shall see what will become of his dreams."

But Reuben said:

"Brothers, let us not slay him, let us not shed blood: cast him in one of these pits. But let us not do harm to him by our own hands. . . ."

Reuben said this in order to gain time and be able to save Joseph from his brothers' hands.

At first the brothers did not want to listen to Reuben's advice, but finally they agreed to it. They seized Joseph, and Simon and Levi cast him into a pit in which there was no water, but which was swarming with snakes and scorpions. Before throwing him into the pit, however, the brothers beat Joseph and stripped him of his coat of many colors. And though Joseph was almost naked the reptiles did not harm him. God heard his cry of distress and kept them hidden in the clefts and holes of the pit and they would not come near him.

3. Joseph in the Pit

And after having done their cruel deed they sat down to partake of a meal. Joseph, however,

calling to them out of the depths of the pit, appealed to his brothers, thus:

"O, my brothers! what have I done unto you and what is my sin? Why are you not afraid of God? Am I not flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone? Have we not all one father, one God? Why do you act thus toward me? How will you be able to show your faces to our father? O, Judah, Reuben, Simon, Levi, my brothers, deliver me from the darkness into which you have cast me! Though I sinned against you, are you not the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who taught you to be compassionate with the fatherless, pity the orphan, give food to the hungry, and clothe the naked? How can you withhold your pity from your own brother? And even if I sinned against you, yet you must hearken unto my plea for the sake of our father. O, would that my father knew what his sons are doing to one of their brothers."

The brothers hearing Joseph's lamentation, moved away from the pit so as not to hear his weeping. With a firm decision in their hearts to do away with their brother, they continued their meal. When they had finished eating they were about to say grace, but Judah pointed out to them the inconsistency of the situation: "We are about to take the life of a man, and yet you would offer a blessing! . . . That would not be a blessing but a blasphemy."

At once everybody realized the peculiar condition they were in. They were afraid to release Joseph because he might tell their father whose anger they would incur. He might even curse them. Then when a caravan of Ishmaelites passed on their way to Egypt, Judah spoke thus to his brothers:

"What do we gain if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to those Ishmaelites, and let us do him no violence, for he is our brother, our flesh and blood. The merchantmen will take him on their travels to the ends of the world, and he will be lost among the people of the world."

While these deliberations went on, Reuben was absent. For he had hidden himself in the mountains, in the hope that he might be able to hurry back in a favorable moment and draw Joseph forth from the pit, but his good intentions were frustrated. For though the brothers resolved not to shed their brother's blood, they decided not to release him, either.

4. *Brothers Sell Their Brother*

In the meantime, while the brothers were considering the idea of selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites, seven Midianitish merchantmen passed near the pit in which he lay. As it was a

scorchingly hot day, the travelers became exceedingly thirsty and looked for water. They noticed that various kinds of birds were circling above a pit (the birds were sent by God to shelter Joseph with their wings from the heat of the day); so the Midianites thought: "Surely there must be water in that pit." But as they came close to it they heard Joseph wailing and screaming. They looked down into the pit and saw a very handsome lad crouching on the ground. They asked him:

"Who are you? Who brought you here? How do you come to be cast into this pit in the wilderness?"

But Joseph could not answer them, for he was exhausted from shouting and weeping. So the Midianites dragged Joseph out from the pit, and took him along with them on their journey. When they passed before the place where Joseph's brothers sat, the latter called to the Midianites:

"Why have you done such a thing to steal our slave and carry him away with you? We have cast this disobedient slave in the pit by way of punishment. Now, return our slave to us!"

To which the Midianites made the following reply:

"Why should you talk foolishly, and tell lies? This lad is worthy to be your master, as is shown by his beauty of form, appearance and pleasant

looks with which he excels you all. Do not talk vain words, we shall not pay attention to what you say, nor believe you. In the free wilderness we found this youth, so he belongs to us."

"Return to us our slave, lest you meet your death," was the short retort of Jacob's sons.

As soon as the Midianites heard this, they took up the challenge and unafrighted they drew their swords ready for battle. But at the same time, Simeon, mighty son of Jacob, leaped up at them, and with a drawn out sword was ready to fell them all at one time; at the same time uttering such a war-cry that the earth reverberated. The Midianites became very frightened, all went black before their very eyes, their knees shook and they prostrated themselves before the Hebrews. Simeon, then addressed them thus:

"Know you not who I am? I am Simeon, the son of Jacob, the Hebrew, who destroyed the city of Shechem, alone and without aid, and, who, together with my brothers have fought victorious battles against many of the Canaanites and Amorites, and destroyed their cities. Now, hasten to restore the slave-boy to us, else I will give your flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field."

Now, the Midianites, greatly afraid of Simeon, and terrified, said to the sons of Jacob:

"Didn't you say that you cast this lad into the

pit because of his rebellious spirit? Of what good would such a slave be to you? You had better sell us this boy, for we are ready to pay any price you may name."

(This was so ordained by God lest Joseph remain with his brothers and be killed.) They consented to sell their own flesh and blood, their own brother, Joseph. The price paid by the merchants for Joseph was twenty pieces of silver, enough to buy a pair of shoes for each of the brothers. Thus was a brother sold for a pair of shoes. . . .

5. *The Sad Trail; At Rachel's Grave*

Many of the experiences that fell in the lot of Jacob, also were experienced by his son, Joseph: Jacob was hated by his brother, Joseph was hated by his brothers; Jacob fled to a strange land, Joseph was sold to a strange land; Jacob became a servant to a master, Joseph, too, was to become a servant.

The Midianites continued their journey to Gilead. But soon they regretted the purchase they had made. They feared that Joseph was kidnaped from the land of the Hebrews, and that if his kinsmen should find him with them, death would be their punishment for the abduction. They considered, "Indeed because the boy was stolen, he was sold for such a low price." While thus discussing with one another, they met the traveling

caravan of Ishmaelites, that had been earlier observed by the Israelites. Now they decided to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites that they should get back the price they had paid to Jacob's sons, and that they might escape the danger of being caught with the kidnaped boy. Accordingly, the Midianites sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites who paid for him twenty pieces of silver.

Now, as a rule, the Ishmaelites used to load their camels, with pitch and skins of beasts, but this time they loaded their camels with all kinds of perfumeries, so that Joseph should not have to smell the ill-smelling merchandise. The caravan was a very jolly company. But Joseph soon heard them say "we are on our way to Egypt," and he burst into tears, at the mere thought of having to be separated from his father and from the land of Canaan. One of the Ishmaelites who noticed Joseph's crying thought he was uncomfortable riding, and allowed him to go on foot, but Joseph kept on wailing: "My father, O my father!" When the Ishmaelites grew tired and annoyed by his lamentations, they beat him, and thereby caused the lad to cry the more, until he was so exhausted that he could not move on. Now the Ishmaelites, with relentless cruelty sought to silence Joseph by threats. . . . Thereupon God, seeing Joseph's affliction and distress, sent darkness and terror upon the Ishmaelites, and their hands grew rigid when

they raised them to beat Joseph. Greatly amazed at this they asked one another: "What does our God do to us?" And they did not know that for the sake of Joseph, God brought about this misfortune.

Thus they continued their journey. When the caravan passed near Ephrath, the place where Rachel, Joseph's mother was buried, Joseph hurried, jumped off the camel, and threw himself upon his mother's grave with the following lamentation:

"Mother, my mother! Arise, wake up from your eternal sleep, come forth and see how your son has been sold into slavery. . . . Arise, my mother, see your son and weep together with me over my misfortune. Awake, O my mother, rouse yourself from your sleep and prepare your combat against my brothers, who stripped me even of my shirt, the coat of many colors that my father gave me, and sold me as a slave to Midianite merchantmen, who, in turn, sold me to these Ishmaelites, who beat me relentlessly, and who separate me from my father. . . . Arise, mother dear! Accuse my brothers before God and see whom He will justify in the trial and whom He will find guilty. Arise and pray to God, perchance He will bring me back to my father, in order that he might not go down with sorrow to the grave."

Unable to utter another sound from exhaustion and grief, he hugged his mother's grave, and fell upon it as immovable as a stone. Then he heard a voice gentle, yet filled and heavy with tears, speak to him:

"My son, O my son, Joseph! I heard your complaints, your groans, your weeping. I saw your tears, I know your misery, and your trouble is added on to my miseries. But, my son, Joseph! Wait on God and put your trust in Him. Fear not for God is with you, and He will deliver you from all evil. Go down into Egypt with your masters, and fear naught, for God will be with you in whatsoever you will do."

Joseph listened and when it stopped, he cried again more bitterly. Now the Ishmaelites' patience was nigh exhausted, and one of them beat Joseph, kicked him, and drove him away from the place with imprecations. Then did Joseph entreat his new masters to bring him back to his father who, very rich, would reward them handsomely for his return. But they said to him: "We will beat this craze out of you! What? are you a free man and not a bondsman sold for the small sum of twenty pieces of silver." And while saying it they dealt him fresh blows. . . .

6. Sold as a Slave in Egypt

And it came to pass when God heard the distress

of Joseph, that he sent darkness upon the earth to enshroud it while the thunderbolts caused the whole earth to quake, and the merchants lost their way in terror. The camels stood still, and no matter how strongly their drivers beat them they refused to budge from their spot, but instead, crouched down upon the ground. Then the Ishmaelites spoke to one another and said: "Why had God brought this upon us?" So one of them said: "Perchance it is for the sake of the slave we have mistreated this day. Let us beg his forgiveness. Then if the boy will forgive us and the storm will cease, we shall surely know that all this came for his sake, but if not, we shall know it is just a misfortune that has befallen us."

The Ishmaelites did accordingly, and they said to Joseph:

"We have sinned against God and against you. Pray to God and entreat Him to take this death plague away from us. For we recognize our sin and we repent of it with all our hearts!"

Joseph prayed to God and He harkened to his plea. The storm was calmed. The darkness vanished, and the sun appeared again. The camels rose from their places and the caravan could continue its way.

Now the Ishmaelites saw plainly that all their troubles came to them for the sake of Joseph and they spoke to one another: "We know that all the

evil came to us because of this poor fellow, and wherefore should we bring death upon us. Let us take counsel together."

One of them said :

"Let us fulfil the lad's wish to return him to his people in Canaan. There must be truth in what he says."

Another one said :

"We have covered a great part of the journey already, and it is not advisable to turn back."

A third one advised :

"Let us sell him as soon as we are able to."

This plan was decided upon. They continued on their journey. When they came to the borders of Egypt, they met four men, descendants of Medan, a son of Abraham (by his wife Keturah) to whom they sold Joseph for nine shekels. The two companies, the Medanites and the Ishmaelites, arrived in Egypt on the same day. When the Medanites heard that Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, was in need of a slave, they came to him at once. Potiphar was willing to pay the twenty silver shekels the Medanites asked for him, for Joseph pleased him. Only he was afraid lest he was stolen. Accordingly the Medanites went and fetched the Ishmaelites who testified that this lad was a slave and that they sold him to these people. Potiphar, thereupon, bought Joseph from the Medanites, and thus Joseph became a slave in Egypt.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FIRST PHARAOH

THERE lived in the land of Shinar, a wise man who had understanding in all wisdom, and of a beautiful appearance, but he was poor and indigent. His name was Rikayon, (Empty-handed), and he had a hard task to make a living. He decided to go to Egypt, to Oswiris, son of 'Anom, the king. Perhaps he would find grace in the eyes of the king who would give him the opportunity to support himself, and become a great man—as befitted his wisdom.

Now, when Rikayon came to Egypt, he asked the inhabitants of the land concerning the king, and they told him that the custom of the king was to show himself to the public only once a year. On that day, the king was of the habit to pass judgment in the land and to receive petitions of his subjects. When Rikayon heard this, he became greatly disappointed and sorrowful. That night, hungry and homeless as he was, he was forced to spend in a ruin which was formerly a bakery. There he lay without being able to sleep, think-

ing what he should do to earn his livelihood until the king would make his annual appearance.

He rose in the morning and walked until he met vegetable dealers. At this he decided to do likewise—to sell vegetables and thereby earn a living. But he was strange in the city and unacquainted with the customs of the people, so he was like a blind man among them. He did obtain some vegetables, however, and brought them to market to sell. Unfortunately, ruffians assaulted him, took away his wares and made a laughing stock of him.

Rikayon spent the second night in the ruin, and embittered against the country and her people, lay awake until a plan formed in his mind. He arose in the morning and gathered together thirty strong men of the rabble, armed them with weapons, led them to the city's cemetery and stationed them there while he addressed them thus: "In the name of the king, I charge you not to let anyone be buried here unless you receive two hundred pieces of silver." The thirty bandits applied Rikayon's order to all the people of the city.

In eight month's time Rikayon and his men amassed great riches of silver and of gold, also acquired a considerable force of armed men and horses ready to do his bidding.

On the day when the king appeared among the people, they complained before him about the tax on the dead, saying:

"May the king live forever! What is this thing that you do to your subjects in this city, not to allow any dead to be buried until a sum of two hundred pieces of silver be paid for each dead? Did ever a thing like this come to pass in the world since the days of Adam that the dead should not be buried without a heavy tax put upon them for burial? We know well that it is the privilege of the king to take an annual tax of the living, but never did we expect you, O king, to levy on the dead, too. We cannot endure it any longer. The whole city is ruined thereby, and don't you know it, our gracious Sovereign?"

The king, ignorant of Rikayon's doings, heard this and fell into a great rage, shouting: "Who is this that dares to do such a thing in my land without my permission?" The people told him about the actions of Rikayon and his men. Whereupon the king's anger was so aroused that he ordered Rikayon and his men to be brought before him.

And Rikayon took about a thousand children, boys and girls, clothed them in silk garments beautifully embroidered, and mounted them upon horses. He also took a great quantity of gold, silver and precious stones, and a magnificent charger and delivered all this as a present to the king. These gifts did not fail to have the desired effect upon the king and his councilors. When

Rikayon, in well-chosen words and flattery, described to the king what he did, he won not only his heart but also that of the whole court. Immediately the king said to Rikayon, your name shall not be Rikayon (Empty-handed) but Pharaoh (Pay-master¹) since you did exact a tax even from the dead.

The king and his subjects loved Rikayon for his wisdom and they all resolved to make him a prefect of the king. For some time he ruled the people by authority of the king who still made his appearance among them once a year. After a time Rikayon managed the affairs of the land so cunningly that everybody decided to throw off Oswiris from his throne and place Rikayon in his stead. And though he greatly taxed the Egyptians yet all the people loved Rikayon, the Pharaoh, for his wisdom, and they decreed that every ruler in Egypt should thenceforth bear the name of Pharaoh.

¹ From word פָּרַע to get paid, to exact.

CHAPTER XIX

SORROW AND SADNESS OF AN AGED FATHER

1. Repentance That Came Too Late

AS soon as the selling of Joseph was a thing of the past, the brothers repented of their action. They even hastened after the Midianites to ransom Joseph, but their efforts to overtake them were in vain. They were too far gone and were not to be found. In the meantime, Reuben rejoined his brothers. When he had approached the pit, with the hope of finding Joseph there, and rescue him without his brothers knowing of it, he came close to the pit and called, "Joseph, Joseph!" And, as no answer came to his call, he looked down into the pit with horror, thinking that a snake must have bitten Joseph to death. But not finding him there, Reuben thought: "Surely, the brothers have repented of their evil deeds, and have taken Joseph from the deep pit themselves." However, when he came to where his brothers sat and saw that Joseph was not with them, and from their downcast faces

learned that something terrible must have been done to his brother, he at once tore his garments and cried out bitterly: "The lad is not here and what answer shall I give my father!" As he received no answer from his brothers, he concluded that Joseph must have perished, so he continued crying: "The lad is not here and whither shall I go?"

Thereupon, did the brothers make a clean breast of all they did to Joseph and told it to Reuben. When Reuben remonstrated with them as to the monstrosity of their crime, he pointed out to them that their father who loved his son, Joseph, would never find consolation in the loss of the boy. Also, if he should find out what they did, he would curse them with an everlasting curse. (As Noah had cursed his son, Ham of old). Accordingly, they all vowed never to reveal to their father what they did, and he who would break his vow, would do it at the risk of his own life. As to the concealment of the crime, and as to finding an acceptable explanation for the disappearance of their brother, the brothers decided to accept Issachar's advice. The advice was to take Joseph's tunic of many colors, dip it in the blood of a little kid of the goats (since its blood resembles that of a human) and to send it to their father Jacob, who would learn from it that his son was devoured by a wild

animal while on his way to execute his mission.

Simeon, alone of all his brothers, opposed this suggestion. He did not want to part with Joseph's coat of many colors, and he threatened to fell anyone who would attempt to take it away from him. He was very angry with his brothers for not letting him slay Joseph. But when the brothers told him that they would put all the blame on him, he surrendered it.

Now, Naphtali was as swift as a nimble hart—he could run across a field of corn without breaking one ear. So the brothers took the coat, tore it, as an animal would do, dipped it in the blood of a kid, and sent it with Naphtali to their father. Naphtali quickly ran and came to his father with a downcast head and sad countenance and said to him:

“When we were driving our herd homeward, we found this garment covered with blood and dust on the highway, a little beyond Shechem. Recognize now whether it be your son's coat or not.”

Jacob immediately recognized the coat he had given his favorite son Joseph, and, overwhelmed with grief, he fell prostrate and lay long on the ground motionless like a stone. Then he arose, and cried aloud, weeping: “It is my son's coat, a wild beast has for certain devoured him. Joseph, my son, is without a doubt torn to pieces.”

2. *A House of Sadness*

In the evening all the brothers returned, their garments rent, and dust strewn on their heads in great mourning. Jacob asked of them to tell him where they found the coat of many colors, whereupon they answered him exactly what Naphtali had told him. Now, being certain of his misfortune, Jacob broke out anew in mourning and lamentation. And thus he lamented:

"It is indeed my son's coat. A wild beast has eaten him up. . . . I sent him to see you and the flocks, and he went to do my errand; this misfortune took place, while I was thinking that he was with you."

"No, father, Joseph has not even seen us, nor did we see him," said the sons of Jacob.

After these words, Jacob could doubt no longer as to the fate of his son, and he continued his mourning:

"O my son Joseph, my son! It is all my fault that this misfortune overtook you. I am greatly distressed, my son! How sweet was your life to me and how bitter is your death. Would to God that I died in your stead, Joseph my son! Where are you my son and where is your soul? Arise, arise from your place and look at my grief for you, my son Joseph. Come, come my son and count the tears that roll down my cheeks and

bring their number before God, that His wrath may be turned away from me. O, Joseph my son, none has died a death like yours since the world stands. O my son, return and behold how distressed I am! But I did not create you: God formed you, God breathed the breath of life into you, and gave you unto me. And God who gave you unto me, has taken you away from me. What God has done is good."

With words like these and many like them, Jacob mourned for his son until he fell to the ground in great silence.

When the sons of Jacob saw their father's grief they repented of their deed and wept bitterly. But no one would tell Jacob, since they took an oath that he who would tell aught to his father about what was done to Joseph would be killed by the rest. God, too, did not reveal the deed unto Jacob, for God said: "The decree I have given to Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a strange land, would have to take place in the life of Jacob, and of his own accord, Jacob would never wish to depart from this land. Then, he would have to go down into the land chained like a captive. . . . But I shall not reveal it to Jacob, my servant, either, and thus he will go down into Egypt with gladness!"

Judah was very grief stricken. He laid his father's head upon his knees and wiped his tears

away as they flowed from his eyes. But he himself wept bitterly. All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, he said: "I shall go down to the grave mourning for my son."

Isaac heard of the misfortune that had befallen his son, and he knew that Joseph was alive, but since God had not revealed it to Jacob, he did not feel himself justified in acquainting his son with the real fate of his grandson.

Thus did Joseph's father lament for him many days.

3. *A Wolf Comforts Jacob*

When Jacob had somewhat recovered from the tragedy that had befallen him, he rose from the ground, and while tears streamed down his cheeks, he addressed his sons thus:

"Rise, my sons, take your swords and your bows, go out in the field, and make search for the body of my son, and you will bring it to me, so that I may bury it. Also keep a lookout for beasts of prey and catch the first you meet, and bring it to me. Perhaps God will see my affliction and will send you the very animal that devoured my son, that I may avenge my son's death."

Jacob's sons, set out early next morning to do their father's command, while he remained at home weeping and lamenting for Joseph. And as

soon as they came to the wilderness, they found a wolf which they caught and brought to their father. They said to him: "This one we met first and we have brought it to you." Jacob got hold of the wolf and said to it with bitterness:

"Why did you devour my son, Joseph, without any fear of God of the earth, and without any thought of the grief that you would bring down upon me? God will punish you through my hands."

But, in order to console Jacob in his grief, God opened the mouth of the wolf, and he said to Jacob:

"I swear by God who had created me, and by your life, my lord, that I have not seen your son, nor torn him into pieces. From a land far off, I came hither to seek for my son who was taken away from me, even as yours. I do not know whether my son is dead or alive. And as I came today in the field to look for him, these men caught me and brought me to you, adding more grief to my grief over my lost son. Now, O Son of Man, you can do with me as it seems best to you. But I swear, that not only have I not devoured your son, but that I have never tasted human flesh in all my life."

Jacob became very astonished at the speech of the wolf, and let it go. But he still mourned for his son and would find no consolation.

CHAPTER XX

UP FROM SLAVERY

1. *Joseph, Miraculous Slave*

THOUGH free-born and favorite son of his father, Joseph was soon reconciled to his fate as a bondman. Though his heart was embittered, yet he decided to serve his new master faithfully. And God was with Joseph so that he was successful in whatever he did. Joseph used to go about his work while moving his lips in prayer to the God of his father, that he should grant him grace and favor in the eyes of his master. Once, as Potiphar noticed the movement of his lips he said to Joseph:

"What are you doing? Are you trying to cast a spell on me?"

"No," answered Joseph, "I am only praying to my God."

"To your God?" asked Potiphar. Can you show me your God?"

To which Joseph replied:

"Let my master open wide his eyes and look at the sun."

Potiphar looked for a while at the sun and stopped:

"I cannot look steadily at the sun," said he.

Then said Joseph:

"If you cannot look at the sun which is only one of God's handiwork, how can you expect to look at God, who created the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, and all which is in the world?"

But Potiphar wanted to convince himself that his servant possessed miraculous powers, because his God was with him. Accordingly, he once called to Joseph and said to him:

"Bring me some hot water, Joseph."

When Joseph did so, his master said to him:

"I am sorry, Joseph, I did not mean hot water but lukewarm."

So Joseph said:

"Drink, my master, for the water is lukewarm."

"I shall rather have a glass of spiced wine," said Potiphar after seeing that the water was lukewarm.

Joseph said to him:

"It is as you wish it, my lord. This is spiced wine."

Marveling at these successive changes, Potiphar tried once more:

"What I really wanted, Joseph, was some absinthial wine."

When straightway the sweet spiced wine was changed into bitter wine, Potiphar became more astonished and saw clearly that God was with Joseph. So he gave him all the keys of his house and made him overseer over everything that belonged to him, putting his entire trust in Joseph. And God blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake.

Now, Joseph thanked God for the happy state he was in. He offered the following benediction to God: "Blessed, art Thou, O Lord, that Thou hast caused me to forget my father's house!" For at home he was exposed to the envy and jealousy of his brothers for whatever good thing he did or received. But here he lived in plenty and affluence. And, being free from all worries, he turned his attention to his personal appearance and began to dress his hair, beautify his face, and generally to become elegant in his walk. But God said: "Your father is mourning over you, in sackcloth and ashes, while you eat well, sleep well and beautify your appearance. Therefore, I shall stir up against you your master's wife. . . . Then, when your life will be once again embittered, will you think of your father."

2. Joseph's Faithfulness Toward His Master

And it came to pass when Zuleika, Potiphar's wife set her eyes on the young slave that her husband bought, that she fell in love with him. She had never seen a youth of such ravishing beauty. So, she began to pursue Joseph daily with her amorous talk and with flattery. Joseph, however, did not even look at her.

"O, how beautiful you are! I have never seen anyone as beautiful as you are!" said Zuleika to Joseph.

But he replied:

"God, who formed me, has created all men in the manner he wished!"

Languishingly Zuleika continued:

"How beautiful are your eyes, the eyes with which you have charmed all Egyptians, both men and women."

"Beautiful as they may be while I am alive, so ghastly will they be to look upon in the grave." So answered Joseph her compliment.

"But I do love to hear you talk, Joseph," she continued. "Your voice is so melodious. I beg of you. Take your harp, play on it while you sing to me."

"My voice is sweet and melodious when I sing songs of praise to my God," said Joseph.

Zuleika added:

"O, Joseph, your hair is so beautiful. . . . Take my golden comb and comb the hair of your precious head while I look upon you."

Rather irritatedly, Joseph said to her:

"How long will you continue to speak such words to me. Leave me alone, and attend to your house duties."

"Nothing in the house interests me, only you, Joseph!"

And so daily did Zuleika tempt Joseph with flattery and sweet words to cause him to sin and be untrue to his master.

As Zuleika could not persuade Joseph to fulfil her sinful wish, she became very sick. All the ladies of the city came to visit her, and they said to her:

"Zuleika, why are you so languid and wasted, is there anything amiss? Is not your husband a prince, great and honored in the sight of the king? Is it possible that you may desire a thing that you cannot obtain?"

To which Zuleika made this answer:

"My friends, today I shall show you the cause of my sickness and my wasted condition."

She commanded her maid-servant to prepare a banquet for all the ladies. This was done and a table was spread before them in her house. She also placed knives upon the table to peel the or-

anges with. Just when they were about to peel the fruit, Joseph was ordered to appear at the banquet hall, arrayed in costly garments, to wait on her guests. When Joseph came in, the women could not take their eyes off him, and they all cut their fingers with their knives, so that the oranges in their hands were covered with blood. . . . But the women did not know what they did, or that they cut their fingers, because they looked upon Joseph without turning their eyes away from him.

"What are you doing?" cried Zuleika to her guests. "I have set oranges before you, and all of you cut your fingers!"

The women looking at their hands said to the hostess:

"Your slave has so enchanted us that we did not see what we were doing."

"Do you see," said Zuleika to them, "you saw his face but once and this is what happened to you, not being able to control yourselves. Now consider my condition, when I am with him continually in the house. . . . How then can I control myself from languishing on account of him."

"This is true," said the women. "But why can you not make him your lover?"

"I tried all in my power to persuade him, and did not succeed. This is the reason for my sickness," Zuleika confided in her friends.

Potiphar and nobody else in the house suspected

the cause for Zuleika's sickness, only the women whom she told the reason knew it. Joseph sought to avoid remaining in the house alone with his master's wife. But once it happened that an opportunity presented itself for the two to remain alone. It was on the day of the annual Nile festival, when the great river overflowed its banks, that everyone of the house went to the river bank for the festivities. Zuleika remained at home under the pretense of being ill. This was her long looked-for opportunity. She rose up and arrayed herself in queenly garments. She placed precious stones on her head, onyx stones set in silver and gold, and she beautified her face very much. Then as Joseph entered the house to do his work, she came to him, asking him to be untrue to Potiphar, because of her great love for him. But he refused, saying to her: "See, my master knows nothing about what I do in the house, and he has put everything in my charge. No one has greater authority in this house than I, and he has kept nothing from me, but you, because you are his wife. How can I do this great wrong and sin against God?"

As Joseph did not listen to her, her great love toward him turned to hate, and she told her husband that Joseph was trying to be disloyal to him. And so Potiphar had Joseph arrested and put in prison. But even there God was with Joseph

and showed kindness to him and enabled him to win the favor of the keeper of the prison, so that he placed all prisoners in Joseph's charge and made him responsible for whatever they did there.

3. *The Dreamer Interprets Dreams; Story of Kimtas*

Once Pharaoh said to his chief butler:
"Give me a glass of wine."

The butler hurried to execute his master's order, but when Pharaoh began to drink of the wine, he found a fly in the glass. This negligence on the part of his noble officer angered the Egyptian ruler greatly. At the same time did the chief baker bring some bread to the king. But as he began to eat of it, it was discovered that the bread contained some pebbles. So these two officers were put in the same prison where Joseph was. Being noble prisoners, they enjoyed certain privileges, one of which was: they were given a special man to wait upon them. That man was Joseph.

After a year passed, the butler and the baker, both had a dream during the same night. The dreams were peculiar, and both of them rose in the morning very disturbed. Joseph, when he came to wait on them in the morning, saw plainly that they were sad. So he asked Pharaoh's officers:

"Why do you look so sad today?"

The officers answered him:

"We have had a dream, and we have no one to interpret it. Speak, therefore, to the overseer to send us one of the magicians of the court to interpret our dreams for us."

Joseph said to them:

"Do not the interpretations of dreams belong to God? Perhaps He will give me understanding to interpret your dreams! Do tell them to me."

This reply of Joseph incurred the anger of Pharaoh's butler, and wrathfully he said to Joseph:

"Aren't you only a bondman who was imprisoned? How do you come to dream interpretations? Can a donkey be an astrologer, or a mule a magician? . . ."

In answer Joseph said to him:

"Have you heard, my lord, of the great physician, Kimtas?"

"Surely," said the butler. "Who does not know of the greatest physician Kimtas."

"But if you wish to hear what happened long ago in his life, I am ready to tell."

"Do tell us, then!" asked the butler.

Joseph began:

"Great and famed was the physician Kimtas, throughout all the lands. Once he decided to leave his country to travel in the world, to see whether he would not find greater physicians than he from

whom he could learn new medical knowledge. Kimtas did as he thought. He saddled his donkey, took along with him medicaments in a sack, and journeyed from one place to another—from one city to another. And wherever he came, he healed the poor, and everywhere his name became a blessing.

“Once, when he arrived in a certain large city in the land of Canaan, he was very weary from his journey and lay down under a tree to rest, and fell asleep. A thief passed by him, took off his good clothes, and left his torn garments near him. When he rose and discovered what happened to him, he was glad that the thief did not steal his medicine-bag from him, and said: ‘That adage is true: He who sleeps must wear tattered clothes.’ He had to put on himself the torn garments of the thief and came thus like a beggar to the city.

“Arrived in the city, he passed near a beautiful house whence came voices of crying and weeping. He entered the house and saw despondent parents standing near the sick bed of their child and begging the three doctors to save their child from death. ‘Have mercy on us, take all we have and save our child,’ they cried. Kimtas, thereupon, observing the child, said to his parents: ‘Give your boy to me, I shall heal him with some of the medicine I have in my bag.’ The physicians looked with contempt at the poorly dressed man, and

said: 'What! This pauper will cure your son?' And the child's father, embittered as he was, took hold of Kimtas' collar, and threw him out of the house.

"When the doctor left the house, the wife said to her husband: 'You were wrong driving away that poor man who offered his services to us. Perhaps he would be able to cure our child.' 'Don't talk like this,' said her husband to her, 'that was only a poor idiot who wanted us to listen to his insane stories.'

"The child died and his parents wept and mourned his death.

"Kimtas understood that he was driven from the rich house because he looked like an insane man. So he decided to tell everybody who he was. . . . He did so. But people now took him as an insane person without any doubt. They all ran away from him, and children called after him: 'Kimtas! Kimtas! Heal us!' while throwing stones at him.

"Seeing this, Kimtas sat down on the ground, took out the sweet-smelling medicines from his sack and put them near him. The people began to suspect that there must be some truth in what the pauper said and they asked him: 'If it is true that you are Kimtas, why are you dressed like this? Thereupon did Kimtas tell the people all that happened to him on the way. Little by little people came to him for treatments and they soon dis-

covered that he was really the famous Kimtas.

"When the father of the dead boy realized that the man who offered to heal his child was indeed a great physician, he lamented his son's death the more, remonstrating thus with himself: 'I have killed my own son. Had I not driven out that physician, my son would have lived yet. I know now that a man is not to be judged by his clothes only. Clothes may make the man, but the man must be judged by his knowledge and acts.'"

Completing the story, Joseph added:

"My lord thought I was a born slave, but the truth is I was kidnaped from my land, where I was born to a very great and wise man, who taught me all kinds of wisdom. Here, too, I committed no sins, but they put me in the dungeon."

The butler, thereupon, told Joseph his dream:

"In my dream I saw a vine before me, and on the vine were three branches and as if budding, it put out blossoms, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into his cup, and gave it to Pharaoh."

And Joseph said to him:

"This is its interpretation: The three branches are three days; within three days Pharaoh will release you from prison and restore you to your office, and you will give Pharaoh's cup into his hand as you used to do when you were his butler."

To which he also added:

"But when all goes well with you, remember me, show kindness to me and speak in my behalf to Pharaoh and bring me out of this house. . . ."

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph: "I also saw something in my dream: There were three baskets of white bread on my head, and in the uppermost basket there were all kinds of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

And Joseph answered:

"This is its interpretation: The three baskets are three days; within three days Pharaoh will take off your head and hang you on a tree, and the birds shall eat your flesh. . . ."

And all came to pass as Joseph had said, on the third day. The day on which he interpreted the dreams to the two distinguished prisoners, a son was born to Pharaoh, and to celebrate the event the king arranged an eight-day feast for his princes and servants. The feast began on the third day after the birth of the child. On that occasion the chief butler was restored with honor to his butler-ship, and the chief baker was hanged. Pharaoh's counselors had discovered that it was not the butler's fault that the fly had dropped in the king's wine, but the baker had been guilty of care-

lessness in allowing the pebble to get into the bread.

Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. God also punished Joseph there-with because he put his trust in man, not in Him. And he was kept in prison for two more years, making his stay altogether twelve years.

4. *The Death of Isaac*

At that time, while Jacob was still mourning for his son, and while Joseph was still in prison, Isaac reached the age of one hundred and eighty years. Feeling that his end was approaching, he called his two sons to himself, to charge them with his last will, and to give them his blessing. Both his sons came, and with them their sons. Isaac first blessed the eleven sons of Jacob, embracing and kissing them. He lay his hands on their heads and said:

“The God of your ancestors shall bless you, and shall multiply your descendants like the stars of the heaven.”

He also blessed the children of Esau as follows:

“May God throw your terror and your fear upon all your enemies.”

When Isaac made an end of blessing his grandchildren, he said to Jacob and his sons thus:

“God of the world spoke to me: ‘I shall give

this land to your children as an inheritance, if they will observe my commandments and my laws, then I will fulfil the oath I have taken to Abraham, your father. Now my son, teach your children, and your children's children to fear God and to do only that which is right and kind. One shall have mercy upon the other and help one another in time of trouble, in order that He may keep His covenant with you and with your descendants after you.' ”

After he had finished talking to his children, he expired and died and was gathered unto his people old and full of days.

Isaac's sons mourned the death of their father, and all the kings of Canaan, upon hearing of the death of Isaac, came to pay him the last homage. His sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, where his father and mother, and his wife were buried before him.

The funeral over, Esau said to his brother:

“Come, let us divide our father's property into two portions, and I, as the elder, claim the right of choosing.”

Accordingly, Jacob divided their heritage in this manner: All the material possessions of their father formed one portion, while the other consisted of Isaac's claim upon the Holy Land, together with the Cave of Machpelah. And, the division made, Jacob said to his brother:

"You know that God promised our fathers this land. Now, then, if you take this land I will take the material wealth, and if you choose the material possessions, I shall take the promised land."

Esau, thereupon went to ask the advice of his cousin, Nebajoth, son of Ishmael, who happened to be there, too. And Nebajoth said to him:

"Do not listen to Jacob. The land promised to your fathers is in the meantime in the hands of the Canaanites—very mighty people. Not so soon will you be able to claim it. You better take the material wealth, and give Jacob the claim to the land."

Esau did accordingly. He chose the gold and the silver and all other things belonging to his father for his share of the inheritance, and to Jacob were left the Cave of Machpelah, and the title to the Holy Land. An agreement to this effect was drawn up in writing, duly signed and witnessed. Esau dwelt thereafter in Mount Seir (Edom) the land of the Horites, and Jacob and his children dwelt in the land of Canaan.

5. The Prisoner Before Pharaoh

Two years later Pharaoh had a dream: He stood by the Nile. From the Nile he saw coming up seven cows, good-looking and fat, and they had been feeding in the river-grass. Then seven other cows came up after them out of the Nile, bad-

looking and lean, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the river. The bad-looking cows ate up the seven good-looking fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.

Afterwards he slept and had a second dream: He saw seven ears of corn, plump and good, growing upon one stalk. Also seven ears, thin and blasted by the east wind sprang up after them. The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. Then he awoke and realized that it was a dream.

In the morning Pharaoh's mind was disturbed, and his heart beat violently when he recalled his dreams, especially the second one, about the ears of corn. He, therefore, called the magicians and wise men of his land and he told them his dreams. They endeavored in vain to find a satisfactory interpretation. They explained that the seven fat cows meant that seven daughters would be born to Pharaoh, and the seven lean cows meant that he would bury seven daughters. . . . The good ears of corn signified, they told him, that Pharaoh would conquer seven countries, and the seven blasted ears—that seven countries would rebel against him. . . . They also disagreed with regard to the ears of corn—some said they meant that Pharaoh would build seven new cities; and the thin ears—that these seven cities would be destroyed in Pharaoh's lifetime.

The interpretations did not please Pharaoh, and

he issued a decree ordering all interpreters of dreams to appear before him. Those not obeying his command were to be killed, while the one who succeeded in interpreting the dream satisfactorily would be rewarded handsomely. In obedience to this decree, there gathered at Pharaoh's court all the magicians from Goshen, Tahpanhes, Zoan, and all the cities of Egypt. To all these the king told his dreams, but none could find their true meaning. Some interpreted it thus:

"The seven fat cows were the seven legitimate kings that would rule over Egypt, and the seven meager cows indicated that seven princes, not of Pharaoh's dynasty, would rise up against these seven kings and exterminate them. While the seven ears meant that the seven superior princes of Egypt would engage in war for their overlord, and would be defeated by as many insignificant princes."

Now, other magicians interpreted Pharaoh's dreams in this way:

"The seven cows signified seven fortified cities of Egypt, which would in the future fall into the hands of the seven Canaanitish nations. . . ."

Another interpretation:

"Pharaoh would take seven women as wives and all of them would die. . . . Furthermore there would be fourteen sons to Pharaoh, seven of which would conquer the seven weaker ones. . . ."

The king became so displeased with these interpretations that he ordered his magicians to be put to death. But Merod, his chief butler, seeing the vexation of his lord, thought: "The king may die because of failure of these wise men to interpret his dream, and should another Pharaoh ascend the throne, he might appoint another butler. . . . Immediately Merod stepped before Pharaoh and said:

"May Pharaoh live forever! I now recall my sins: Pharaoh was very angry with his servants and imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. We both had dreams the same night, each with a special meaning. There was with us a young Hebrew, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him our dreams, he interpreted them to us, each man according to his dream. And our dreams came true exactly as he interpreted them. I was restored to office, but the other man was hanged. Now O King, though that slave be of a despised people, send to call him, as he is still in prison, and do not slay the magicians. . . ."

Thus, finally did the butler remember Joseph, but he introduced him in a contemptuous manner, for so are the wicked, for though they do a good deed, they do it with malice.

Pharaoh revoked the edict of death that he had issued against the wise men of Egypt and he sent

for Joseph. The messenger hurried Joseph from the dungeon; but he shaved his face and changed his clothes, and made himself presentable before Pharaoh.

The king was sitting upon the royal throne arrayed in princely garments, clad with a golden ephod upon his breast. The fine gold of the ephod sparkled, and the carbuncle, the ruby, and the emerald flamed like torches and all the precious stones in the king's crown flashed so like a blazing fire, that Joseph was greatly amazed at the appearance of the king. The throne upon which Pharaoh sat was covered with gold and silver, and with onyx stones, and it had seventy steps. If a prince or any great personage came for an audience with the king, it was customary for him to advance and mount to the thirty-first step of the throne, and the king would descend thirty-six steps to speak to him. But if one of the people came to speak to the king, he ascended only to the third step and the king would come down four steps from his seat and address him from there. It was also the custom that one who knew all the seventy languages of the world, ascended the seventy steps of the throne to the top, but if a man knew only some of the languages he was permitted to ascend as many steps as he knew languages, were they many or few. And another Egyptian custom was,

that none could be king unless he knew all the seventy languages.

When Joseph came before Pharaoh, he bowed down to the ground and he ascended to the third step, while the king sat upon the fourth step from the top and spoke to Joseph thus:

"O young man! my servants tell me that you can interpret dreams when you hear them. Now I have had a dream and there is no one able to interpret it. So I ask of you to give me a true interpretation, do not fear to tell the truth, and do not flatter me with lying words. Tell me the truth, no matter how bad it might be."

In his modesty Joseph denied that he was able to interpret dreams and said:

"It is not in me; it is in the hand of God, and if it be the wish of God he will permit me to announce tidings of peace to Pharaoh. Let Pharaoh tell his dreams to his servant."

And Joseph bowed again before the king.

6. Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams

Pharaoh said to Joseph:

"In my dream as I stood on the bank of the Nile, I saw seven cows, fat and good-looking, which had been feeding in the river grass. And there came up after them seven more cows, thin, and bad-looking and lean, worse than I ever saw in all the land of Egypt; and the lean and bad-

looking cows ate up the first seven fat cows, and when they had eaten them up, one could not tell that they had eaten them, for they were still as bad-looking as they were at the beginning. Then I awoke. Again I dreamed and saw seven ears plump and good, grow up on one stalk; next seven ears, withered, thin, blasted with the east wind, sprang up after them; and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. I have told the dreams to the magicians, but there is no one who can, satisfactorily, interpret them for me."

(To be sure, Pharaoh did not tell his dreams exactly as he saw them; he omitted some words, added others, and in general did not tell them accurately in order to test Joseph's abilities. But Joseph corrected him, and pieced the dreams together, exactly as they came to Pharaoh in the night. The king was therefore greatly amazed.)

Now Joseph began to interpret the dreams to Pharaoh, and said to him:

"Pharaoh's two dreams are in reality only one. God has made known to Pharaoh what He is about to do: The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years. It is one dream. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are also seven years, and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind, represent seven years of famine. That is what I said to Pharaoh: 'God has shown to Pharaoh what He

is about to do!' Seven years of great plenty throughout the land of Egypt are coming, and they shall be followed by seven years of famine; so that all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, for the famine will consume the land. And the plenty will not be known in the land because of that famine which follows, for it shall be very severe. The dream came to Pharaoh twice to indicate that its fulfilment is assured and that God will soon make it come true." (Pharaoh knew that this was the true interpretation, for he dreamt also the interpretation of his dream, and forgot it when he arose. But now he recollected it.)

"Now therefore," Joseph continued, "let Pharaoh select a man who is discreet and wise and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers over the land and collect one-fifth of all the produce in Egypt in the seven years of plenty. Let them gather all the food of these good years that come and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep it for food in the cities. This will furnish a supply for the land during the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the people of the land may not perish because of the famine."

The king heard the wisdom of the youth and marveled, yet, in order to test him, he said:

"How am I to know that *your* interpretation is true?"

"Let this be a sign to you, O king!" said Joseph, "that my words are true, and my advice is excellent. Your wife, who is about to give birth to a child at this moment, will bring forth a son, over whom you will greatly rejoice; but in the midst of your joy will come to you sad tidings, about the death of your two-year-old first-born son. And you will have to find consolation in your newly born son for the death of the other."

7. Joseph Made Ruler Over Egypt

Scarcely had Joseph finished speaking, and left the king's presence to go back to the dungeon when the report of the birth of a son was brought to Pharaoh; but this report was immediately followed by the sad news that the first-born crown-prince dropped down to the ground and suddenly passed away.

Thereupon Pharaoh sent for all the princes, noblemen and officers of his realm and said to them:

"You have heard the words of Joseph, the Hebrew, and you have seen that the signs which he has foretold came true, and I know for certain that he has interpreted my dream correctly. And I am certain that the interpretation of the dream will come to pass. Advise me now how to save the land from the great famine. Look hither and thither and see if you can find a man of wisdom

and understanding equal to that of Joseph's and I am convinced that the land can only be saved if we heed the counsel of the Hebrew."

The princes and noblemen admitted to Pharaoh that they must accept Joseph's advice, and that the king look for a man worthy of this task. But Pharaoh said to them:

"If we traveled the earth from one end to the other we could find none such as Joseph. If you think well of this I will set him over Egypt."

However, some of Pharaoh's astrologers said to him:

"Oh, king, will you set over Egypt a slave who was bought for twenty pieces of silver?"

But Pharaoh maintained that not only was Joseph a free-born man, but also that he was a descendant of a noble family.

However, the princes could not be silenced, for they said to Pharaoh:

"Don't you remember the law of the Egyptians that none may serve as king or viceroy unless he speaks all the languages of men? This Hebrew knows no other but his own tongue. Send for him again and examine him in all matters a ruler of Egypt should know, and then decide as it seems wise to you."

Pharaoh consented and promised to examine Joseph on the following day. That night Gabriel, sent by God, appeared unto Joseph, and awaken-

ing him, taught him all the seventy languages which Joseph mastered quickly after Gabriel added the letter *H* to his name, changing it from Joseph to J'hoseph.¹

The next morning when Joseph was presented to the king, he mounted all the steps of the royal throne, (since he knew all languages) and reaching the seventieth step, he stopped there to talk to Pharaoh in his own tongue, Hebrew, which the king did not know. Pharaoh became terrified since there was one language that he did not master. Joseph promised not to reveal this secret to anyone. And all the nobles were greatly pleased with Joseph and were happy that he fulfilled all the requirements for ruling over Egypt.

Pharaoh said to Joseph:

"You did give me the counsel to look for a man discreet and wise, to set him over the land of Egypt, that he may, in his wisdom, save the land from the impending famine, and there is none so discreet and wise as you. You shall therefore be the second in the land after Pharaoh, and according to your word shall all my people go in and go out, my servants shall receive their monthly allowances through you. Only on the throne will I be superior to you."

Joseph was, thereupon, installed in his high

¹ Taking the "H" from the *NAME* of Four letters.

position. The king took off his signet ring from his finger, and arrayed him in princely apparel and set a golden crown upon his head, and laid a golden chain about his neck. Then he commanded his servants to have Joseph ride in his second chariot, which went by the side of the king's chariot; that chariot was drawn by a great and strong horse of the king's stable. In the vanguard marched musicians no less than one thousand, striking cymbals—and one thousand blowing flutes; also five thousand men with drawn swords gleaming in the air preceded Joseph's chariot, while twenty thousand of the king's nobles, girt with gold-embroidered leather belts, marched at the right side and left side of Joseph. Servants of the king, preceding him and following him, burnt incense upon his path, and cassia, frankincense and all kinds of sweet spices, and strewed myrrh and aloes wherever he went. And twenty heralds walked before him proclaiming with loud voices: "This is the man whom Pharaoh has chosen to be viceroy. All the affairs of state will be administered by him, and whoever will resist his commands, or will refuse to bow down to him, will be punished by death." Then did all the people prostrate themselves before Joseph and they cried: "Long live the king and his viceroy!"

Joseph looked down from his horse upon the

people, then lifted his eyes heavenward and exclaimed:

“The Lord raises the poor out of the dust,
And lifts up the needy out of the dunghill!
Lord God!
Happy is the man who trusts in Thee!”

8. *Dreams That Came True*

Joseph, then, accompanied by Paraoh's officers, journeyed through the whole land of Egypt, and viewed all there was therein. When he returned to the king, he gave him fields and vineyards as a present. He also gave him three thousand talents of silver, and a thousand talents of gold, and onyx stones and bdellium, and many other costly things. The king also commanded that every Egyptian give Joseph a gift. A platform was erected in the open street and there everyone brought according to his means—some brought gold nose rings, or rings or bracelets, others brought coins, still others—jewels. Joseph took all this and placed it in his private treasury. Pharaoh also presented Joseph with one hundred slaves, but he had to acquire many more, since he resided in a spacious palace. It took three years to build it. Special magnificence was lavished upon the hall of state which was his audience chamber, and upon the throne fashioned of gold and silver and inlaid with precious stones, on which was a

representation of the whole land of Egypt, and of the river Nile. And as Joseph increased in riches, so he increased also in wisdom. For God had it made so in order that all should love and honor Joseph.

Pharaoh changed the name of Joseph to that of Zaphenath-paneah, which signified, "He who can reveal all secrets with ease."

Joseph married Asenath, daughter of Poti-phaera, priest of On. She gave birth to two sons. The first son, Joseph named Manasseh, (meaning "Making to forget"); for he said: God has made me forget all my toil and troubles. While the second son he named Ephraim, ("Fruitful"); for he said: God made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. These sons were born in the years of plenty before the seven years of famine came.

In the seven years of plenty, Joseph found an opportunity of rendering his king a great service. He equipped an army of four thousand, six hundred men, providing all the soldiers with shields, spears, bucklers, helmets and slings. With this army, and aided by the people of Egypt, he waged war against Tarshish in the first year after his appointment as viceroy. The people of Tarshish had invaded the territory of the Ishmaelites. They, being few in number at the time, and not being able to withstand against the mighty Tarshishians, applied to the king of Egypt for succor against

their enemies. Accordingly, Pharaoh sent Joseph and his army to help the Ishmaelites. They marched to the land of Havilah, where they were joined by the Ishmaelites. With united forces they fought against the people of Tarshish, and vanquished them. They routed them, drove them out of the country, and settled their land with Ishmaelites. And when Tarshish was occupied by the Ishmaelites, the defeated people took refuge with their brothers at Javan.² Joseph and his army returned to Egypt without having suffered the loss of one man.

Joseph's prophetic interpretation came true: That year and the six following years were years of plenty, exactly as he had foretold. The harvest was so ample, besides, that a single ear of corn, produced two heaps of grain, and Joseph made very careful arrangements to provide abundantly for the years of famine. He gathered up all the grain and had earth strewn on the stored food from the very soil on which it grew, and he preserved the grain in a very precautious manner, guarding it against mildew and rot. The Egyptians, too, tried, on their own accord, to put aside some of their overabundant harvest of the seven plenteous years, for the future, but when the famine arrived, they saw that their stored food

² See Gen. X-2-5.

rotted and became unfit. The famine broke with such suddenness that the bread gave way unexpectedly.

It was then that Egypt went to Joseph, and Joseph sold them food, for the famine was severe, and not having taken good care of their grain, the Egyptians had practically no food. Now this famine visited not only Egypt but three other lands, namely: Phoenicia, Arabia and Palestine, (Canaan). Joseph's own dreams had partly come true: he did become a ruler; the other part was about to come true—his own brothers would yet come to bow down to him. Joseph knew that his brothers would also come to Egypt. He bore them no enmity, he only waited for them, patiently, to receive news from his father and younger brother.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ISRAELITES COME TO EGYPT

1. *Looking for a Lost Brother*

THE famine which came also to Canaan inspired Joseph with a hope of seeing his brothers. To make sure of their coming, he issued a decree concerning food-buying in Egypt, as follows:

“By order of Pharaoh, Zaphenath-paneah, and princes of the realm, be it enacted:

“Anyone who wants to buy grain in Egypt may not send his slave to do his buying, but he must send his sons for that purpose. An Egyptian or a Canaanite that has bought grain and then sells it again shall be put to death, for none may buy more than he absolutely needs for his household’s maintenance. No one shall come hither with more than one animal of burden.”

In addition to this decree, Joseph appointed guards to stand in all gates leading into the capital city, to register the names of all arrivals, their names as well as those of their parents and of their grand-parents; these registration lists were to be

handed to Joseph personally every evening. Now, with these precautions Joseph was sure not to miss his brothers.

The famine became severe in the land of Canaan, but Jacob's family as yet were not in want, for Jacob's storehouses were full. But he did not want to arouse the envy of his neighbors and so, one day he called his sons and said to them:

"My sons, what are you waiting for? Behold I heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt, so go down there and buy for us."

Accordingly Joseph's ten brothers went down to Egypt to buy food. But Benjamin was not sent with them, for Jacob feared that harm might come to him on the journey.

While on the way to Egypt, the brothers of Joseph thought more of him than of their errand. They said one to the other: "We know that Joseph was carried down into Egypt, and we shall search for him there, and if we should find him, we will ransom him from his master, and if his master should refuse to sell him to us, we shall use force, even at the risk of our own lives."

As the brothers entered Mizraim, capital of Egypt, they all came in through a different gate, while the guards registered their names. But the first thought of the brothers was Joseph, so before going to make any purchases, they all went to seek their brother. For three days they made search for

him everywhere, even in the most disreputable quarters of the city, but in vain, no trace of Joseph could they find. In the meantime, the viceroy had ordered all selling-stations but one closed. And even at that station no one could obtain grain before he gave his name. Now for Joseph, having his brothers' names registered, it was an easy task to have the station overseer seize his brothers and bring them before him.

However, as three days passed without the brothers making their appearance, Joseph sent servants to look for them. Finally the ten Hebrews were seized and brought before the Egyptian ruler.

2. The Lost Brother Meets His Brothers

Joseph, appareled in garments of byssus and purple, with a crown of gold on his head, was seated upon his throne, surrounded by all his valiant men. His brothers fell down before him in awesome prostration—in admiration of his beauty and stately appearance. They did not recognize him: he was a beardless youth when sold by them into slavery, and now he was a mature person with a beautiful black beard surrounding his handsome face. But he recognized his brothers, whose appearance did not change much.

As soon as he saw them, he was inclined to make himself known unto them, but in order that they

be somewhat punished for their cruel treatment of him, he made himself strange to them. And taking his cup in his hand he said to them:

"By this magic cup I can tell that you are spies who came to see the weak spots of our land!"

"No, our lord," replied Jacob's sons, "no, we are not spies. We came to your land to buy corn."

But the Egyptian ruler said:

"If it be true that you are no spies, and that you came to buy corn, why is it that you entered the city through different gates?"

To this, the brothers gave the following explanation:

"We are all the sons of one man, in the land of Canaan, and he advised us not to enter the city together through the same gate, that we attract not the attention of the people of the place."

"Now, indeed I am certain that you are all spies," harshly said Joseph. "All the people who come to buy corn do it without delay, in order to bring their food for their household, the sooner; you, however, lingered here three days without making any purchase. You have been wandering around through all parts of the city, even in the most disreputable quarters. Such is the way of spies."

Seeing that the trap of accusation was becoming more and more evident the brothers involved themselves more, by answering:

"We, your servants, are twelve brothers, born to one man, Jacob, the Hebrew. We are ten here, since one—the youngest has remained at home and another one—a brother of the youngest of the same mother, was lost. It was for him that we were looking in this land."

"Have you already looked for him anywhere else without success that you came to look for him in Egypt?" inquired Joseph.

"For we heard that some Ishmaelites have kidnaped him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. That is why we made search for him in your city," said the brothers.

Joseph paused a while and said to his brothers:

"Let us suppose you did find your brother serving as a slave and his master would demand a high sum for his ransom, would you pay it?"

"Of course, we would!" came the unanimous reply.

"And suppose that his master would not wish to part with your brother for any sum, what would you do then?"

"We would force him to do it. Even if we had to shed blood!"

"See, now," said Joseph, "you are not only spies but also murderers as well. Report had been brought to us what two of you had done to the people of Shechem, avenging a wrong committed to your sister. Now you come to Egypt, you admit, to

use violence because of your brother. . . . Only in one way can I become convinced that you are innocent, and not spies: If you consent to send one of your number to fetch hither your younger brother. But in the meantime you shall all be imprisoned!" Joseph concluded his words and had his brothers arrested.

The brothers did not know that Joseph knew their tongue for there was an interpreter between them—and when he was gone, Joseph heard his brothers' repenting words:

"God does indeed punish us for the heartless treatment we dealt out to our brother, paying no heed to his distress, though he fell at our feet entreating our mercy." To which Reuben added. "Did I not say to you 'Do not sin against the boy,' but you would not listen, now, therefore, his very blood is required."

When Joseph heard these words, he could not control his feelings and turned away from them and wept. Afterwards he came back to the imprisoned brothers, and said to them through the interpreter:

"I will let you all go, with the exception of one of you whom I shall keep as hostage, to see whether you told me the truth. Now you all go home and bring the food you bought. Then come back and bring with you your youngest brother of whom you spoke. Then will your words be veri-

fied, if you are spies or not. I do this because I fear God. . . .”

Joseph decided to arrest Simeon. But when the brothers yielded to Joseph's demand, Simeon said to them: “You desire to do to me as you have done to our brother, Joseph!” But the brothers replied: “What else can we do? Can we let our households perish of hunger?” Simeon then said: “Do as you please. But I would like to see the man that will be able to detain me.” Joseph thereupon, sent word to Pharaoh to let him have seventy of his mighty men. When these appeared, and were about to lay hands on Simeon, he uttered a loud cry and his assailants fell to the ground and had their teeth knocked out. . . . Pharaoh's strong men, as well as all the people who stood about Joseph fled frightened, only Joseph and his son Manasseh stood calm and unmoved. Manasseh rose up, dealt Simeon such a blow on the back of his neck, that he actually knocked him down. Then he put manacles upon his hands and fetters upon his feet, and cast him into prison. Joseph's brothers were greatly amazed at the strength of the youth. But Simeon said: “This is not an Egyptian blow, it feels like a blow by a kinsman of ours! . . .”

He was bound and put into prison only before the eyes of the brothers, but as soon as they were out of sight, Joseph ordered good fare to be set

before the prisoner, and that he be treated with great kindness.

3. *Jacob's Letter to the Egyptian Ruler*

The brothers, except Simeon, had their asses loaded with grain, and departed from Egypt. While on their way stopping at the lodging place, Levi opened his sack and found all his money back in his money-bag. All the brothers became affrightened: "What is God visiting on us?" they said one to the other. "This is certainly another pretext for an accusation on us by the Egyptian," they finally concluded. Moreover, Reuben said again: "God is bringing all this evil upon us to expiate for our sin, in having so heartlessly sold the lad, Joseph."

Arriving in Canaan, Jacob was astonished not to see Simeon with them. But when they told him what happened to them, Jacob cried out:

"What have you done? When I sent Joseph to you to see how you were, you said: 'an evil beast has devoured him.' Now when Simeon went forth with you to buy corn, you tell me: 'the King of Egypt cast him into the dungeon,' and now you want to take Benjamin away and kill him, too. You will certainly bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Reuben said:

"You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring back Benjamin to you."

"First in birth and first in foolishness!" exclaimed Jacob; "Are your sons not equal to me as my own?"

Judah advised his brothers to desist from urging their father then. "When the morsel of bread will be gone, our father's stubbornness will also be gone," he said.

And it was so. Soon the supplies bought in Egypt were eaten up, and Jacob's household began to suffer hunger. The little children came to Jacob crying: "Give us bread to eat! Give us food!" Jacob heard them and was very sad and wept, seeing the affliction of his household. He then summoned his sons, and asked them to go down into Egypt to buy food:

"Go, please, to Egypt again, and buy some food," he said.

Then said Judah to his father: "The man, the Egyptian ruler, said to us not to come to him without our youngest brother, Benjamin. How can we go there if you do not send Benjamin with us?"

"But who asked you to tell the man that you had a brother?" protested Jacob.

"Father," answered Judah, "the ruler of Egypt is a strong and mighty king and if we go to him without our brother, we will surely be put to death. None of the kings of the whole world is as

wise as the king of Egypt. You ought to see his palace and his throne, and all his servants who stand before him. He strikes awe and terror in the hearts of all that see him, seated upon his throne arrayed in his royal robes, with a large golden crown upon his head. Even before we had told him who we were, he had told us our names. And since he accused us of being spies, we of necessity had to tell him who we were. Now, therefore, father, send the boy with us to go down to Egypt, to buy food in order that we starve not." Moreover Judah promised to bring Benjamin back safe and sound, and Jacob granted his request permitting Benjamin to go down to Egypt with his sons. Jacob also gave them from the choicest products of Canaan such as balm, almonds, pistachio and honey to bring as a present to the Egyptian ruler. Furthermore, Jacob put double money in their hand (to provide against a probable rise in prices in the meantime) and also the first money that they found in their sacks.

Jacob also put a letter addressed to the viceroy of Egypt into the hands of Judah. Thus read the letter:

"From Jacob, son of Isaac, grand-son of Abraham, the Hebrew, to the mighty and wise king Zaphenath-paneah, ruler of Egypt, Greetings!

"I make known unto my lord the king, that the famine is very severe in our land, and I am sending my sons to you, to buy us a little food that we may live and not die. My children surround me begging for food which I am unable to provide. I am old and cannot see with my eyes which are weak and poor because of my years and on account of my never-ceasing tears for my son, Joseph, who had been taken away from me these many years. I charged my sons, when they first went down to Egypt, not to pass through one gate all together at the same time, when they arrived at the city, that the inhabitants should not take undue notice of them. I also charged them to go up and down the land of Egypt, seeking for my lost son Joseph, peradventure they might find him there.

"This they did, and you accounted them as spies. How could you do it, you who are so sagacious. You, from whom nothing is hidden, you, who are able to interpret dreams which come to pass. How could you look upon their countenances and declare them to be spies?

"Now, my lord and king, I am sending unto you, as you ordered, my youngest son, Benjamin. I beg of you, take good care of him until you send him back with my chil-

dren. Have you not heard what my sons, Simeon and Levi, did to eight cities of the Amorites, which they destroyed on account of their sister, Dinah? Benjamin was our consolation after the loss of his brother, Joseph.

“Do you not know, O king of Egypt, that the might of our God is with us, and that He always hearkens and accepts our prayers. Had I called upon God to punish you for the way you treated my sons, you would certainly meet with misfortune both you and your people. But I considered, perhaps you are showing kindness to my son, Simeon, who is your prisoner now. But now that I trust you even with my son, Benjamin, do take good care of him, and that no evil should befall him.

“I have said now all I had in my heart. My sons take their youngest born with them to see you as you had asked—and may they all return to me in peace.”

This letter Jacob put into the keeping of Judah, charging him to deliver it into the hands of the Egyptian ruler.

4. Joseph Meets His Brother Benjamin

Jacob's sons went down to Egypt and came to Joseph. His joy was very great when he saw his brother Benjamin. Immediately Joseph com-

manded the steward of his house as follows: "Bring the men into the house, slaughter animals and prepare the meal, for these men will dine with me at noon."

And the steward did so. But when Jacob's sons were brought in the ruler's house they became frightened, and said: "Certainly we were brought here because of the money that was returned in our grain-sacks. The man is again trying to accuse us as at first, in order to take us to him as slaves."

So when they came near to Joseph's steward they said to him:

"Hear us, our lord! Before the famine came to our land we used to support all needy, now we come here to be supported; but we do not want anything for nothing: when we returned home after our first trip to Egypt, we found our money back in our sacks, so we have brought it back now."

The steward reassured them concerning the money, saying:

"However it may be, whether for your own sake or for the sake of your ancestors, God must have sent you a treasure in your sacks, for we received your money."

The steward brought out Simeon who looked good, and as if good care had been taken of him. He told what good treatment he had received, for just as soon as they left the city, he had been re-

leased from prison, and thereafter entertained splendidly in the house of the Egyptian ruler.

As soon as Joseph appeared, Judah took Benjamin by the hand and presented him to the viceroy, while all bowed down to him. Joseph asked them concerning the welfare of their father and their grand-father, and they said: "Our father is well, *he* is yet alive." From which Joseph learned that their grand-father was dead. At that time Judah gave Joseph the presents and the letter that his father sent to him. Joseph was so moved on beholding his father's hand-writing, that he had to go into another chamber to weep. Then when he could control himself, came back, summoned Benjamin to him, lay his hands upon his head and greeted him with these words: "God be gracious to you, son!"

But he could not refrain himself from weeping, as his heart became filled with emotion upon seeing Benjamin, so he went into a side room and wept again. However, he washed his face, and came out, and controlling himself said: "Have dinner ready!"

When all was ready, and the guests were to be seated, Joseph raised his cup—a cup made of silver in which precious jewels were set—and pretending to inhale the secret knowledge from it, he called: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah—the order of their birth; and thus he seated the rest of them

in accordance with their birth and names. Reaching Benjamin he said: "My beaker tells me, that you are motherless, so am I, too. Be seated therefore near me." And the brothers marveled at what Joseph did. During the meal, Joseph took his portion, and gave it to Benjamin, and his wife, Asenath, followed the example, as did Ephraim and Manasseh, so that Benjamin had four portions in addition to that which he had received like the other sons of Jacob. Wine, too, was served at that meal, and it was for the first time in many years that both Joseph and his brothers drank wine.—Joseph, because all the time he had been separated from his father took it upon himself not to taste wine; and the brothers—because they regretted having sold Joseph vowed not to drink wine. But this time they let themselves be persuaded by Joseph, and Joseph was so happy seeing his brother Benjamin, and knowing that all was well at home.

Joseph talked with Benjamin while the brothers were away, and asked him whether he had a brother born by his own mother, and Benjamin answered that he had one but that now he did not know what happened to him—for he was lost. Joseph continued to ask:

"Have you a wife?"

"Yes, I have a wife and ten sons," answered Benjamin.

"And what are their names?" inquired Joseph.

And Benjamin replied:

"Their names are, *Bela*, *Becher*, *Ashbel*, *Gera*, *Naaman*, *Ehi*, *Rosh*, *Muppm*, *Huppm*, and *Ard*."

But Joseph remarked: "Why did you give your children such strange names?"

"These names are symbolic of the loss of my brother," explained Benjamin. "*Bela*—my brother disappeared among strange people; *Becher*—he was the first born to my mother; *Ashbel*—he was taken away from our father; *Gera*—he dwells as a stranger in a strange land; *Naaman*—he was exceedingly lovely; *Ehi*—he was my only brother; *Rosh*—he was to be head of all our brothers; *Muppm*—he was beautiful; *Huppm*—I did not see his wedding day, nor he mine; and *Ard*—he was as beautiful as a rose. This is the significance of their names. For I am sure that my brother is not dead, but is alive in some far away land."

Then did Joseph bring the magic astrolabe, whereby one could find out all things, and he said to Benjamin:

"I have heard that the Hebrews are acquainted with all wisdom, do you know the astrological science?"

To which Benjamin answered:

"My lord, your servant is also acquainted with this science, for my father had taught me all wis-

dom, as he used to instruct my brother, before me."

Benjamin, thereupon, took the astrolabe, and divided the land of Egypt into four parts, then he subdivided into cities, broadways, market places, streets and palaces—and finally, to his great astonishment, he discovered by the aid of the astrolabe, that the man who was sitting before him, the Egyptian ruler, was his brother Joseph. When noticing Benjamin's amazement Joseph said to him:

"What have you seen that you are so astonished?"

"Because, Oh, can that be? The man who sits before me is my brother!" said Benjamin excitedly.

And Joseph said:

"I *am* your brother, Joseph. Do not, however reveal this news to your brother. I want to test them still further, as I want them to expiate their sin they had committed against our father and me. I will send you back with them to go to Canaan, then I shall order them be brought back to me, letting them go home and keeping you with me. . . . If they will wish to risk their lives for your safety, I shall know that they have repented of what they had done to me. Then will I forgive them and make myself known to them. But if they forsake you and will want to leave Egypt without

you, then will I not make myself known to them, and they will suffer the consequences. . . .”

Benjamin said:

“Do, brother, as you please, and as happy as I am, I will not reveal my joy and happiness to my brothers until the time for it comes.”

5. *The Lost Brother Found*

Joseph commanded to the steward of his house:

“Fill the men’s grain sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and also their money, and put my cup, my silver magic-cup in the sack of the youngest.”

The steward did so.

Early in the morning, joyful and happy at the ruler’s treatment of them, the brothers returned home. And, scarcely had they gone beyond the city gates, when Joseph commanded his steward to follow after the men, and look for the silver cup. The man followed them and overtaking them he said:

“Why have you treated thus my lord, returning evil for good. Why have you stolen his silver beaker—the one with which he divines, and of which he dines. You have indeed done a great wrong!”

When the brothers heard this accusation of theft they said:

“Why do you speak to us words like these?—

Far be it from your servants that they should do such a thing. Remember, we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in our sacks, why then should we steal silver or gold from your master's house. With whomsoever of your servants the cup be found, let him die, and we also will be slaves to our lord."

But the steward said:

"As you say, so were it proper to do. But I will not be so hard on you. He with whom the cup is found shall be the bondman, and the rest shall be innocent."

Thereupon, he searched all the sacks, in order not to arouse suspicion that he knew where the beaker had been put. He accordingly began with Reuben's sack and ended with Benjamin's. In their rage the brothers shouted to the youngest:

"O you thief, son of a thieving mother! Your mother stole her father's gods, and you stole the Egyptian ruler's cup."

And in fury and vexation the brothers rent their garments. (Thus God paid them measure for measure: they had caused Jacob to rend his clothes in his grief over Joseph, and now they were made to do the same on account of their own troubles.)

Now, convinced without any doubt of Benjamin's theft, the brothers had no choice in the matter but to return to the city. They scolded and beat Benjamin for the trouble he caused them. But

Benjamin bore with them, for he was sure that today would Joseph make himself known to his brothers.

Guarded by the mighty man on his right and on his left, Joseph addressed his brothers angrily:

"What deed is this that you have done to steal away my cup? I know well, you took away my magic cup to find out the whereabouts of your brother who had disappeared."

And Judah, the brother's spokesman answered:

"What have we to say to our lord? What shall we speak or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants. Now let me be servant to you instead of the youth. And let him go back with his brothers to his father. For I became surety for the boy to his father, and how can we come home without him? For our father's soul is actually bound to the soul of the boy, and if he does not come back with us, our father would die."

And Joseph said, while holding Benjamin:

"He who stole my beaker will be servant to me, but the rest can go up in peace to their father."

Saying thus, he dismissed his brothers, while he carried Benjamin off, and locked him in a chamber. But Judah broke the door open and stood with his brothers before Joseph. And he said:

"May I address you, viceroy of Egypt: Even at first you were trying to find false pretenses against

us, taking us for spies. Now we brought our youngest brother as a verification of our innocence. Now, you still are trying to find pretences with us. If it is a slave you want—I offered my own service to you. But you take heed to these words of mine: Two of us have destroyed the city of Shechem and seven other Amorite cities on account of the wrong done to one woman—Dinah, our sister. Therefore, you had better give us our brother back that we go away peacefully from your land.”

And as Joseph gave Judah a deaf ear he became so angry that his right eye shed tears of blood, the hair above his heart grew stiff that it pierced and rent the five garments in which he was clothed, and he took brass rods, bit them with his teeth, and spat them out as fine powder. When Joseph observed these, fear overtook him, and in order to show that he, too, was of extraordinary strength, he pushed with his foot against the marble pedestal upon which he sat and it broke in splinters.

Judah exclaimed: “This man is a hero equal to myself.” Then he tried to draw his sword from his scabbard in order to slay Joseph, but the weapon could not be made to budge and Judah was convinced thereby, that his adversary was a God-fearing man. So Judah said to himself: “He is indeed a good and righteous man, that is why God saves him.”

Joseph said then:

"Is there no wiser man than you among your brothers that you are the spokesman? Why don't they come to speak to me."

"I am responsible to my father for this lad," answered Judah.

"Why have you not helped your brother Joseph when he was being sold for twenty pieces of silver. . . . Go home without this boy and tell your father 'Benjamin was without doubt devoured by a wild beast.'"

These words had such an effect upon Judah that he shouted so loud, that the entire city shook. Joseph fell off his throne and his valiant men lost their teeth. The brothers who until now stood still fell in such a rage that they stamped with their feet on the ground until it looked as if it was plowed. . . . And Judah addressed his brothers thus: "Be brave, behave yourselves as it behooves you!"

Then said Judah to Naphtali who was as swift as a nimble hart, being able to run across a field of corn without breaking an ear: "Hurry through the streets of the city, count their number and come and tell it to me."

When Naphtali returned and reported to Judah that the city was divided into twelve quarters Judah ordered his brothers to destroy the city, himself undertaking to destroy three quarters

while distributing the remaining among the rest, one quarter to each.

In the meantime, Manasseh had assembled a great army, five hundred horsemen and ten thousand foot soldiers, besides four hundred valiant great heroes, who could fight without spear or sword. In order to strike terror in the hearts of his brothers, Joseph ordered them to make a loud noise with all sorts of instruments. The appearance of the army together with the loud noise, did cast fear upon the sons of Jacob. As Judah saw that some of his brothers retreated in fear, he called unto them saying: "Why are you affrightened, since God's mercy is with us!" Hurriedly he drew his sword and uttered a terrific cry, which caused all Egyptians to fall into a great frightened flight. When they ran away in disorder they fell one over the other and perished, while Judah and his brothers pursued them as far as the house of Pharaoh. Judah and his brothers returned soon to Joseph's house pleading with him about Benjamin's release, now with kind words, now with threats and shouts that made the city reverberate.

Pharaoh soon learned the reason of the mighty uproar, and advised Joseph to fulfil the demand of the Hebrews, if he did not wish to have the city destroyed.

Joseph now thought that his brothers were punished sufficiently for the sin they had committed,

and decided to make himself known to them:

He began:

"Did you not say that your other brother was lost? Yes, you yourself sold him, and I bought him. Now I will call him and he will appear."

The brothers stood amazed while Joseph continued:

"Joseph, Joseph, son of Jacob come hither! Joseph, come hither and look at your brothers who sold you! . . ."

The brothers turned their eyes to all sides, and not seeing anyone coming, were puzzled the more. And Joseph continued:

"Why do you look here and there? Behold! I am Joseph, your brother! Is my father still alive?"

But his brothers could make no answer—so great was their bewilderment. And Joseph then began to converse with them in the Hebrew tongue saying:

"I *am* Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Do not be troubled nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has already been two years in the land, and there are still five years in which there shall be neither ploughing nor harvest. God sent me before you to save you through a great deliverance and thus give you descendants on the earth. So now it is not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me like

a father to Pharaoh, and master of all his household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. . . .”

When Benjamin heard how kindly Joseph spoke with his brothers, he understood that Joseph forgave them, and he was happy indeed.

Now word immediately was brought to Pharaoh that the Hebrews were not only reconciled with Joseph, but that they were his brothers. He was pleased with this news, and informed Joseph that he should invite his mighty brothers to make their home in Egypt, promising to give them the most fertile part of his land.

Joseph presented his brothers, appareled in royal garments, before Pharaoh who was well pleased to become acquainted with them, especially when he saw that they were men of heroic stature and beautiful appearance. He gave them wagons in which to bring their families down to Egypt. One wagon Joseph sent for his father—the very one in which he had ridden in state when he became the Egyptian ruler. Joseph then accompanied his brothers to the border and instructed them to bring their families and father to Egypt, and he admonished them not to quarrel on the journey as to who was to be blamed for having sold him, and he also told them not to tell their father about him, suddenly, for a sudden shock might kill him. Instead they should conduct the matter with wisdom.

6. *Good Tidings; Jacob and His Family Go Down
To Egypt*

How different was this journey from the one they had taken before! With joy and gladness did the brothers ride until they approached the borders of Canaan. But as soon as they neared their home, they became sad: "How shall we act that our father should believe us, and that the news should not overwhelm him?"

When they came close to their home, they caught sight of Serah, daughter of Asher, a very beautiful and wise girl, who was also an expert harp player. They called Serah and asked her to play before her grandfather, singing the glad news to him. Serah did accordingly, and sitting down before Jacob she touched the strings while singing melodiously:

"Joseph, my uncle, is not dead!

He lives, he rules o'er Egypt. . . ."

These she repeated several times, while Jacob grew more and more pleasurably excited, and joy filled his innermost soul and heart. The joy was so great that the holy spirit within him reawakened, and he knew that the words of her song were true, for his prophetic spirit which had forsaken him at the time of Joseph's loss, now again took pos-

session of him. Jacob rewarded her with the following words:

"Daughter mine, may death never come to you, for you have revived my spirit." (And so it was. Serah did not die, and after living for innumerable years, she entered Paradise alive.)

While Jacob was thus conversing with his granddaughter, Serah, his sons appeared arrayed in all their magnificence, together with all the presents that Joseph had given them, and spoke jubilantly to their father:

"Glad tidings! Joseph our brother lives! He is ruler over the whole land of Egypt!"

Strengthened by the holy spirit, and seeing the presents his son had sent him, as well as the wagons to bring his family down to Egypt, Jacob believed his sons. The brothers, moreover, told Jacob how kind-hearted his son, Joseph was, and how good he was toward strangers and the needy. For this Jacob thanked God. "I thank Thee, O Lord!" said Jacob, "that my son, Joseph, though sojourned in a strange land, has kept my instructions!"

Jacob rejoiced greatly over the news, and arranged a feast to which came many of the Canaanitish kings who heard of the happy news. After that Jacob said:

"Let me go down to Egypt and see my son before I die."

That night God appeared to him, saying:

“Jacob, Jacob! I am God, God of your father. Do not fear to go down into Egypt, for there I will make of you a great nation. I, Myself, will go down with you into Egypt, and will be with you there.”

When Joseph was informed of the coming of his father, he rejoiced exceedingly, that at last he would see his beloved father from whom he was taken away. Also, the Egyptians who were referring to Joseph as the “former slave” would cease their talk upon seeing from what a noble stock he had come. And in joyful anticipation, Joseph, himself, made ready his chariot to meet his father. Whereupon, the Egyptians, seeing their viceroy preparing himself to meet his father, did the same. Moreover, Joseph proclaimed that everybody should participate in the reception parade for Jacob and his family, and all complied with the decree. So, the procession that accompanied him, was composed of countless men, all arrayed in garments of byssus and purple, marching to the music of various instruments, while many of the women ascended the tops of their houses to see the parade and to greet the Hebrews at their arrival.

All the noblemen of Egypt took part in this great celebration. Joseph rode at the head of the parade, wearing the royal crown which Pharaoh had given him for the occasion. Thus the procession went to meet the incoming Hebrews. And

when Joseph noticed his family coming from afar, he descended from his chariot and walked the rest of the way on foot towards his father, and his example was followed by the princes and nobles of Egypt.

In the meantime, Jacob had observed from his wagon, a man among the Egyptians arrayed in royal garments, a crown upon his head, and a purple mantle over his shoulders, and he asked Judah who it might be. And when he was told that it was Joseph, his joy was overwhelming that his son had attained such honor and glory. About this time Joseph approached his father, and he bowed down to him as did all the people. Jacob embraced his son, fell on his neck and wept and said:

“Now I can die peacefully since I have seen your face that you are still alive.”

Father and son were so deeply moved that they could not speak much. Joseph said to his father and family (seventy persons in number) thus:

“I will go up and tell Pharaoh: ‘My brothers and my father’s household have already come to me from the land of Canaan. Now the men are shepherds, for they keep cattle, and they have brought their flocks and cattle and all they have.’ And when Pharaoh calls you, and says to you: ‘What is your occupation?’ you shall say: ‘Your servants have been keepers of cattle from our youth until now, both we and our father.’ So that you

may live in the land of Goshen, assigned to you, as the Egyptians look down upon shepherds."

Joseph, thereupon brought before Pharaoh his father and his brothers. He did ask them as to their occupation and they answered as Joseph advised them. When Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was, he said :

"I have lived a hundred and thirty years, few and evil have been the years of my life, and they have not been as many as those that my forefathers lived on earth."

He blessed Pharaoh and departed from him.

Joseph, then, gave his father and brothers a place to live in and a home in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land in the province of Goshen, as Pharaoh had commanded.

Thus the Israelites lived in Egypt, in the land of Goshen, and they acquired possessions in it, had many children and became exceedingly numerous.

CHAPTER XXII

“ . . . IN A LAND NOT THEIRS ”

I. *Jacob's Last Days*

THE promise God made to Abraham that his descendants would leave their land to dwell as strangers in a land that was not theirs came to pass in the days of Jacob.

When Jacob's last days approached, he sent to call his son, Joseph. The messengers came to Joseph and said to him:

“Behold your father is sick and he wishes to see you.”

Joseph was very sad to hear this, and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, in order that he might bless them.

And when Jacob saw his son and grandsons, he said to Joseph:

“If I found grace in your eyes promise me not to bury me in Egypt. But when I lie down to sleep with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying-place. (There were many reasons why Jacob did not want to be buried in

Egypt, the main reason being this: in the Messianic times, when the dead will rise, those buried in Palestine will immediately be resurrected, while those buried outside of the Holy Land will first have to roll from land to land, hollowed out for that purpose, until they reach the land of Israel, and only there will their resurrection take place. . . .)

Joseph said to his father:

"I shall surely do as you request, father!"

At this moment a great light filled the house, and Jacob understood that the Shekhinah was present there, and standing at the head of his bed, so Jacob bowed down toward the head of his bed. Then he took the two sons of Joseph to bless them.

And Jacob said to his son:

"I adopt your two sons to be as mine. Levi will not be counted among the twelve tribes, as he will be consecrated to God's service. But Manasseh and Ephraim will be to me even as Reuben and Simeon. They will be entitled like the others to a portion in the Promised Land."

Now, as Jacob wished to bless the sons of Joseph, the spirit of God caused him to see that in the future days the descendants of both would seduce Israel to the worship of idols. And as he was about to lay his hands on their heads in blessing, the Shekhinah forsook him. Jacob asked his grandsons to approach him, and he kissed and em-

braced them, in the hope that his rejoicing over them would cause the holy spirit to come back to him. But the spirit of God did not return.

When Joseph saw this, he prayed to God :

“O God, wilt Thou judge the children of man in accordance with what their descendants would do or in accordance with what they do now?”

God hearkened to the prayer of Joseph and the spirit of God returned to Jacob. Now, as Jacob was about to bless Joseph's sons, Joseph noticed that though he placed his sons near his father's hands, Ephraim, the younger at the left hand, and Manasseh, the older at the right hand, in accordance with their birth, Jacob, however, put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, the younger. For Jacob prophesied that Ephraim would be the greater of the two. And Jacob blessed his grandsons, saying:

“The angel who has redeemed me from all evil shall bless the youths, and let my name be named in them, and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

Joseph received two gifts from his father, the first was the city of Shechem, taken by Jacob's sons from Hamor, son of Shechem, and defended with sword and bow against the attacks of the Amorites. The other gift was the miraculous garments made by God for Adam, and passed from

hand to hand until they came into the possession of Jacob. (Adam's clothes came to Nimrod, from Nimrod to Esau; Esau gave these garments to Jacob, Jacob—to his son, Joseph.)

2. "*Hear, O Israel!*"

And as soon as Joseph and his sons left Jacob's presence, the brothers, envious of the blessings bestowed upon them, said:

"The whole world loves fortune's favorite; and because Joseph is ruler of Egypt our father blessed him." But Jacob, their father, said to them:

"They that seek God shall not want anything. I have blessings enough for all of you. I blessed Joseph not for his greatness but for his goodness and righteousness. Do likewise my sons, fear God, go in His ways, and you shall be blessed!"

And while his sons surrounded his bed, Jacob offered this prayer to God:

"O Lord! I am dying, be Thou father to my children. Show them Thy mercy, and be with them always."

After the prayer, Jacob admonished his sons:

"Know that Egypt is the land in which we are to dwell until God will send the deliverer to us. Great will be the suffering of your descendants in this land, but teach your sons to walk in the ways of God, then will they be worthy to be redeemed. The redeemer will come to them in the name of

God and will redeem them from the land which is not theirs and will bring them to the land of their fathers."

Then the spirit of God revealed to Jacob what would happen to his descendants in the end of days, but as he was about to do it, the spirit of God departed from him. This made Jacob reflect. "Am I better than my father or grandfather? Abraham had Isaac and also Ishmael, my father had Esau and me; are my sons *all* perfect? Let me now ask my sons if there be one among them whose heart is not wholly with the God of my fathers and Israel." Accordingly he asked his sons:

"I adjure you, my sons, to tell me the truth. Is there anyone among you who has intentions of serving other gods besides the God I taught you to serve."

And then did the sons of Jacob answer with one voice:

"Hear O Israel, (our father), the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

Silently and gladly Jacob added:

"Praised be the Name of the glory of His majesty forever and ever!"

3. *The Death and Burial of Jacob*

Jacob called his sons to him and blessed them separately, and after he concluded blessing them, he said:

"Be careful lest you begin to worship idols and forget the God of your fathers. Serve God with all your might and with all your soul, love one another and command your children to do the same, love truth and peace, and you will be distinguished from all nations."

To which the sons of Jacob made the following reply:

"All you command us, we will do!"

Then said Jacob to his sons:

"See, I am about to die, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers."

Then Jacob drew his feet up into the bed and died and was gathered to his people. And Joseph fell upon his father's face and wept upon him and kissed him. "Father, father," he called, and he, his brothers and their wives tore their garments, girded their loins with sackcloth, threw themselves upon the ground, and strewed earth upon their heads. Asenath, wife of Joseph, heard the tidings of Jacob's death, and came together with many Egyptian women to weep and mourn over him. Also many Egyptian men who knew Jacob had come there, as well as many men from Canaan, who had heard of Jacob's death came thither to mourn for him. The mourning lasted seventy days.

Joseph ordered the physicians to embalm the body of his father, and when all preparations for

the burial had been completed, Joseph asked permission of Pharaoh to carry the body up to Canaan. But Pharaoh refused to grant permission. Joseph told him that he was under obligation of an oath to his father. And when Pharaoh told him not to fulfil his oath, Joseph said to him:

“If I will not keep my oath I have taken to my father, I will also not keep my oath I have taken to you, O Pharaoh, that you do not know the tongue of the Hebrews. . . .”

In his distress, Pharaoh granted Joseph permission to go to Canaan to bury his father. He moreover issued a decree to all Egypt to go and accompany Joseph and his brothers on their funeral journey to Canaan.

The bier was borne by the sons of Jacob in the order Jacob told them: Joseph did not carry, since he was viceroy, nor did Levi, as he was destined to be ancestor of the priests, but Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, carried to the east side; Reuben, Simeon, and Gad—on the south side; Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin—the west side; Dan, Asher, Naph-tali, the north side. (This was the order the tribes carried their standards in the wilderness, many years later). The bier was made from pure gold, the borders of which were inlaid with onyx stones and bdellium, while the cover was gold woven work joined to the bier with threads that were held together with hooks made of precious

jewels. Joseph placed a golden crown upon the head and a golden sceptre in the hand of his father, who was now arrayed like a living king.

Thus went the funeral procession: first went the soldiers of Pharaoh, and next all the inhabitants of the land. All were girt with swords and clothed in coats of armor. Then followed Joseph and his household, barefoot and crying, and Joseph's servants followed closely behind. Fifty of Jacob's servants preceded the bier, strewing, in passing, myrrh and other perfumes on the road, so that the sons of Jacob trod upon the aromatic spices as they carried the body of their father.

The procession moved on until it reached Canaan. It stopped at the threshing floor of Atad, and there they held a great and impressive lamentation, and all the thirty-one kings of Canaan also came to take part in the lamentation. They all loosened their girdles in sign of mourning, took off their crowns and put them upon the bier of Jacob. Also the sons of Esau, Ishmael and Keturah (Abraham's wife after death of Sarah) came, and though their intentions were at first hostile toward the Israelites, but seeing all the crowns upon the bier of Jacob, they followed the example.

Yet a war did break out between the children of Esau and the children of Jacob, and this is how it came about:

When Jacob's sons reached Hebron and were

about to lower their father in the Cave of Machpelah, Esau and his people came to prevent the burial, saying: "Though I sold my birthright, yet this parcel of land belongs to me, as I never sold it to Jacob. . . ."

But the sons of Jacob were well aware that Esau sold his part in the Cave of Machpelah, knowing that a bill of sale was drawn up. Esau who guessed rightly that that document was left behind in Egypt, denied that any such bills had ever been made. Accordingly the sons of Jacob sent Naphtali, the swift runner, to Egypt. Meantime, while the quarrel went on between Esau and his nephews, Hushim, the son of Dan, who was deaf, asked why they delayed the burial. When it was explained to him, he became very indignant that his grandfather should lie thus unburied until Naphtali would return. In his anger he seized a wooden club and dealt Esau a mighty blow, that his eyes fell out of their sockets and dropped upon Jacob's knees, and thus he died. The sons of Esau carried his body to Seir to bury it there, while Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah. A lamentation for seven days having been completed, Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt.

4. *Last Days of Joseph*

It came to pass in the thirty-second year of the Israelites' coming into Egypt, that being the sev-

enty-first year of Joseph, that Pharaoh died, and his son, Migron, ruled in his stead. Pharaoh had commanded Joseph before he died to be the advisor to Migron as he was to him. The Egyptians were pleased with that, for they loved Joseph very much. They called Migron, Pharaoh, as was their custom, and this Pharaoh appointed Joseph head of all governmental affairs. Joseph continued to rule Egypt with kindness and righteousness. He was as humble now as when he was Potiphar's servant. Jacob's sons lived peacefully in Goshen and increased in number. They served the God of their fathers, and did not follow the ways of the Egyptians like the other nations that came to sojourn in Egypt but were assimilated by the inhabitants of the land. Jacob's sons spoke their own language—Hebrew—and gave their children Hebrew names. Thus they became a distinct people among the Egyptians.

At that time, Esau's sons made peace with all his neighbors and, united, they went to fight against the sons of Jacob in Egypt. The war was great but Joseph's armies were victorious, and the sons of Esau were defeated.

When Joseph approached the year one hundred and ten of his life and he knew that he was going to die, he called his brothers to his sick bed and charged them thus:

"I am about to die. God will surely visit our

descendants to send them a deliverer to take them out of this land. And until that time comes, instruct your children, that they instruct theirs to carry out my bones from Egypt and bring them in the land promised to our fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Israel."

Joseph died, and was embalmed. His body was put in a coffin made of lead. The coffin was made to sink in the Nile. (That was done by the magicians who were jealous of Joseph and having heard of his last wish to be buried in Canaan, wanted to frustrate it. But when the time of deliverance came, Joseph's bones were taken out from Egypt.)

CHAPTER XXIII

“ . . . AND THEY SHALL AFFLICT THEM ”

I. “ . . . *There Arose a New King Over Egypt* ”

IT came to pass, one hundred and two years after the Israelites came down into Egypt, that Pharaoh (Migron) died, and his son, Malol, reigned in his stead. None of the generation who knew Joseph and his brothers were alive now, and the new generation did not want to remember all the good things Joseph had done for their land.

The first hostile act on the part of the Egyptians toward the Hebrews was to deprive them of their fields, and their vineyards. For the Egyptians grew envious and fearful of the Israelites. In a short time, the seventy persons that came with Jacob into Egypt increased miraculously to the number of six hundred thousand, and their extraordinary strength and stature were alarming.

The Egyptians saw the marvelous strength of the Israelites as shown during the wars waged by Malol, King of Egypt, against Zepho, grandson of Esau, in course of which the Hebrews saved

the Egyptians from an utter defeat. But instead of appreciating what the Israelites had done, the Egyptians grew envious of them and sought their destruction, in fear that the gigantic Hebrews might, in time to come, be turned against them. . . .

Thereupon, the counselors of Pharaoh (Malol) gathered together in the king's court and spoke to him saying:

"See, the children of Israel are greater and mightier than we. You have seen the strength, which they have inherited from their fathers, for only a few of them stood up against a people as many as the sand of the sea, without suffering the loss of even one man. Now these people might become yet stronger, and in case of war they might join our enemies, drive us out from the land, and take possession thereof. Now, therefore, O Pharaoh, give counsel what to do!"

To which the king made the following reply:

"This is my advice: Behold the two unfortified cities, Pithom and Raameses, which must be fortified. Now let us go wisely about it. I will issue a proclamation to all Egypt saying: 'All men of Egypt, the king has commanded to build Pithom and Raameses as forts against battles in the future. Those of you, whether Egyptians or Israelites, who are willing to build, shall have their wages given them daily at the king's command.'

"Then," continued Pharaoh, "you Egyptian nobles go first and begin to build Pithom and Raameses, and I will do the same. In the meantime cause the King's proclamation to be read daily throughout the land, and when some of the Israelites answer the call, treat them nicely, and see that they receive their daily wages. Then, little by little, when they get accustomed to working, overlook the wages, until you have become taskmasters over them and then make them work for nothing. The Israelites will thus, cunningly, be tricked into becoming slaves."

After that, when the proclamation was issued Pharaoh himself went at the head of his nobles, with a brick-press suspended from his neck, taking actual part in the building. Many Israelites were thus trapped into working. For, whenever one would plead incapability for work, they would say to him: "Are you more delicate than our king?" And the king himself urged them on, thus: "I beg of you, my children, to do this work for me. The work is little but the reward will be great. . . ."

Now for some time the Egyptians worked together with the Hebrews, but then the former withdrew gradually, and the latter alone remained at work, still receiving their daily wages. Later, the Egyptians refrained from giving the Hebrews any wages whatsoever, and when the Hebrews refused, the taskmasters forced them to go to work

at the penalty of death. The tribe of Levi alone did not work, since they were not, from the beginning, tricked into work. Thus the Egyptians began to embitter the lives of the Israelites in the time of Malol, their king, whom they named *Maror*, that is to say, "Bitterness."

The building of Pithom and Raameses, however was not successful, for the structures they erected collapsed, causing many Hebrews to lose their lives. But the main object of the Egyptians was to subjugate the Israelites, and this end they gained. Not only were the Hebrews made to work in mortar, bricks and buildings, but they forced them to work in all manner of work in the field.

But the more the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites, the more they increased in number and strength, and the more they spread, so that the Egyptians dreaded them greatly. . . .

2. *Pharaoh's Dream; Drowning of Babies*

Now, in the one hundred and thirtieth year of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt, Pharaoh had a dream:

He saw in his dream that he was sitting on the throne. As he lifted up his eyes, he saw an aged man standing before him, with a balance in his hand. The old man took all the elders, nobles, magicians and great men of Egypt, bound them together and put them in one scale. In the other

scale, the old man put a little tender kid. And the kid in the one scale weighed down all the people that were tied together in the other scale. . . .

Greatly disturbed Pharaoh arose in the morning and called together all his wise men to interpret the dream. But all of them were very much afraid because of the king's vision. Balaam, the son of Beor, took courage to speak to the king:

"O Pharaoh! The dream shows that a great evil will spring up against Egypt, for a son will be born to Israel who will destroy our land completely and will deliver his people out from your land with a mighty hand. Now, therefore, O king, take counsel in this matter, how to frustrate the hope of Israel and their redemption."

Terrified, the king said to Balaam:

"What shall we do unto Israel? Many devices we have tried against that people to no avail. Now let me hear your advice."

"I cannot, alone, advise the king," answered Balaam. "If it please the king, let him send to call the two counselors, Reuel the Midianite, and Job the Uzite and together we shall be able to guide the king aright."

The king did accordingly and sent for those two counselors, who came immediately. The king told them his dream and its interpretation. "What can I do," concluded Pharaoh, "to withstand these Hebrews?"

Reuel, the Midianite (who was also known as Jethro) was the first to speak.

"May the king live forever! My advice is to leave the Hebrews alone. If the king does not wish them to be in his land; let him send them out to go to Canaan, their inheritance. But let the king desist from doing any evil to them." Reuel also related to Pharaoh all the wonders that God did to the ancestors of the Hebrews. He asked the king to remember what Joseph did to Egypt, how he saved the land from ruin. And Pharaoh became angry with his advice and dismissed him with disgrace. (Whereupon he went home, to Midian, carrying away with him the staff of Joseph.)

Then asked the king of Job:

"What is your advice, Job?"

"Let the king do as it seems best to him," came the reply.

Balaam, thereupon, spoke to the king: "Nothing can prevail against the Hebrews. Should Pharaoh consider to burn them by fire, their God would deliver them from it as He had delivered their father, Abraham, from the furnace of Ur of the Chaldees. Neither can the sword prevail over them: Isaac, their ancestor, was delivered from the sword. Nor will hard work diminish their strength: Jacob, Joseph's father, served Laban the Aramean with all kinds of rigorous work and yet he prospered. But there is one way left: Let

Pharaoh order that all male children born to the Hebrews, from this day on be thrown into the water. In this wise, can Pharaoh wipe out their name, for none of them or their ancestors had been tried in this manner."

The advice of Balaam was acceptable to Pharaoh, because the Egyptians believed that God pays "measure for measure" and since God had sworn to Noah not to destroy the world by water, they thought that they would be exempt from a similar punishment. And, accordingly, Pharaoh issued the following decree:

"By Pharaoh—a command:

All male children born to the Hebrews shall be thrown in the Nile. All female children may live."

3. God Protects the Babies

After the decree was issued, Pharaoh took steps to have the people obey his order. He sent officers into the houses of the Israelites to discover all new-born children. To avoid detection, the Hebrew mothers hid their babies. The Egyptian officers, sensing these evasions brought Egyptian babies into the Hebrew homes and pricked them secretly to make them cry. The hidden ones, after the manner of babies, soon joined the crying, thereby betraying their hiding places. . . .

Pharaoh also ordered that the Hebrew women should employ Egyptian midwives, in order to obtain exact information as to time of the child-birth and the sex of the child. . . . If there were parents who wanted to evade the king's command, and preserve a new baby boy in secret, they and all theirs were to be put to death.

Thereupon many of the women who were about to give birth to a baby, would go away into the fields, give birth to their children and leave them there, while they themselves returned home, trusting in God who had sworn to their ancestors to multiply their descendants. God, thereupon, would send one of His angels to wash the babes, anoint them, and swathe them to keep them warm. Then he would place in their hands two smooth pebbles, from one of which they sucked milk, and from the other honey. And God caused the hair of the infants to grow down to their knees which served as a protective garment, and then He ordered the earth to receive the babes. Therein they would be sheltered until they grew up, when the earth would open its mouth and eject them forth and they would sprout up like herbs of the field, and as the grass of the forest. And then each would go to his father's house.

When the Egyptians saw this, they went forth, every man to his field, with his yoke of oxen, and they plowed up the earth as in plowing time.

Yet they were unable to do harm to the infants of the children of Israel, that had been swallowed up and lay in the bosom of the earth. Thus the people of Israel multiplied abundantly. And though many of the grown up babies would be taken away by force from their mother's arms, and thrown into the Nile, yet the child foretold by Pharaoh's dream was brought up and kept concealed from the king's spies.

And the deliverer of Israel *was* born.

CHAPTER XXIV

EARLY LIFE OF MOSES

1. *The Light of the World*

THERE lived a man in the land of Egypt whose name was Amram, the son of Kohath, son of Levi, son of Jacob. He married Jochebed his kinswoman. Jochebed gave birth to a daughter whom they named *Miriam*, signifying "Bitterness," for it was at the time of her birth that the Egyptians began to embitter the life of the Hebrews. And another child was soon born to Amram and Jochebed, whom they called Aaron. And after three years, at the time of the decree about the drowning of the babies, Jochebed conceived again.

God's spirit descended upon Miriam at that time and she prophesied thus: "A child will be born to my parents who will deliver Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians. . . ."

Now, in the twelfth month of the year, that is Adar, on the seventh day of that month, Jochebed's time to become a mother reached, and she gave birth to another male child. And as the child saw

the light of the world, lo! the whole of the house became filled with a great light. The parents were very amazed, and looking outside they beheld that the light which came out of the house filled up the whole of the world, scattering all the clouds and driving them away. Then did the parents know that Miriam's prophecy did come true. The child became at once very dear to them and they hid him for three months.

2. *The Baby in the Ark*

When Jochebed could hide her baby no longer, since the Egyptian officers made a thorough search in all homes of expectant mothers, she decided to abandon the child in the Nile. But this is what she did. She took a little ark made of bulrushes, daubed it with pitch on the outside and with mortar on the inside. (She did not want the baby to smell the odor of the tar, and for this reason she tarred it on the outside.) Jochebed, then, placed the ark in the reeds by the bank of the Nile.

But the child was not left unguarded. His sister, Miriam, stayed on to see what would be the result of her prophecy. Would the redeemer be redeemed? . . .

At that time, the angels of God appeared before Him and said:

"God of the whole Universe! Shall he who is

destined to be the deliverer of Thy people meet with such a fate?"

To which the Eternal replied:

"You know well that I see all things. . . . None of the schemes of men can change anything that has been decreed by Me."

Thereupon, God sent down upon all Egypt a scorching heat which actually burned the flesh of the Egyptians. Thermutis, the daughter of Pharaoh, sought relief from the burning heat in the waters of the Nile. As soon as the princess arrived at the river bank, she noticed the little ark floating on the surface of the water. Immediately she surmised that the little ark contained one of the Hebrew babies cast in the water by the decree of her father, and was filled with pity and ordered her maids to fetch it. But they said to her:

"Our mistress, why do you command us to transgress your father's decree?"

And these words of the maids displeased God and the angel Gabriel appeared at once and seized all her maids except one and cast them away far from this place. And Pharaoh's daughter, herself, proceeded to rescue the child. She stretched forth her arm to grasp the ark, and although the ark was swimming at quite a distance from her, she succeeded in seizing it, for her arm was lengthened. . . . And no sooner had she touched it, than

the leprosy, which had afflicted her body all the days of her life, departed. Her happiness at the sudden cure caused her such great joy, that she immediately opened the little ark, when her joy was even greater. She saw therein an extremely beautiful boy, whose weeping was heart tearing. The child's beauty and his weeping touched her, and though she knew him to be a Hebrew, she resolved, in spite of her father's decree to save him.

The deed of Thermutis pleased God so that He decreed her name to be Bithiah, signifying "A daughter of God." Now Bithiah-Thermutis ordered an Egyptian woman to be brought to nurse the baby, but the baby refused to be nursed. And Miriam seeing this, stepped from her hiding place into the presence of the princess and said to her:

"It is in vain that you try to give this child a nurse who is not of his people. May I go and fetch you a Hebrew nurse?"

And as Pharaoh's daughter gave her permission to do so, Miriam went and called her own mother. . . . Thermutis, seeing that the baby liked this nurse very much, said to Jochebed: "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wage, two silver pieces daily,"

Jochebed was very happy at this event, and she took the child to her own home. Both she and Amram were expecting now that Miriam's

prophecy concerning the child would come to pass.

By exposing their son to danger, Amram and Jochebed had succeeded in having the king revoke his decree about drowning of the babies. The astrologers said to him that the future deliverer of Israel has met his death by water. . . . For they only saw the abandonment of the child but not the rescue.

And, after two years passed and the child was weaned, Jochebed brought him to the princess. Bithiah named him *Moses*, meaning "I drew him out of the water." And God consented that the name of the great deliverer should thus remain, Moses, as Bithiah called him, and that he should not be called by any of the names his kinsmen gave him. (For he was given various names: his father called him Heber, his mother Jekuthiel, the other kinsmen: Jered, Abi-Zonoah, Abi-Gedor, and Abi-Socho.) And Moses was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh as an adopted child of Thermutis. The beauty of the child was of such a degree that whosoever set eyes on him could not leave off looking at him. And everybody loved him for his extraordinary wisdom and beauty.

3. *Moses Takes Off Pharaoh's Crown*

It came to pass in the third year of Moses' life that Pharaoh was dining one day, with his queen,

Alpharaonith, at his right side, and his daughter Thermutis-Bithiah, with the baby Moses in her arms, on his left. Also Balaam, son of Beor, and all his sons and princes were present. While everybody was enjoying the meal, Moses, the infant in Bithiah's arms, stretched forth his hands, took off the crown from Pharaoh's head and put it on his own. When the king and all the princes of the realm saw it they all became terrified, and each one interpreted it a bad portent, a token foreboding some evil. . . .

And Pharaoh said to the princes:

"Have you noticed what this child did? Now what are we to do about it?"

And Balaam found courage to address the king thus:

"Remember, now, O Pharaoh, the dream you had many days ago, and my interpretation thereof. Now, of a certainty, this is the child of the Hebrews in whom there is the spirit of God. Let not the king think that the child did this thing without understanding. Nay, he is a child of the Hebrews and wisdom and understanding are with him to act cunningly toward kings like his forefathers did before him.

"Surely our king knows the history of this people of the Hebrews who make kings stumble before them. Abraham, their forefather, acted thus with the Pharaoh of Egypt in his time, and he

also possessed himself cunningly of the land of Heth and the land of Canaan. His son, Isaac, did the same, with the king of Philistia. Jacob also dealt treacherously with his brother and took away his birthright and his blessing from him. Then, he escaped to Laban, his uncle, in Padan-Aram, and by trickery obtained his daughters, and cattle and all his belongings, and fled from him, returning to the land of Canaan, to his father.

"His sons sold their brother, Joseph, and he went down into Egypt, became a slave and then was put into prison for twelve years, until the former Pharaoh delivered him from the prison and made him great above all the Egyptian princes because of his interpretation of the king's dreams. When God made a famine to descend upon the whole world, Joseph sent for his father, and he brought him down into Egypt together with his whole household, and he supplied them with food without paying for it, while he himself enslaved all the Egyptians.

"Now my lord, after we succeeded in enslaving the Hebrews, this child has risen up in the place of his ancestors in Egypt to do what they used to do. If it please the king, let us shed the blood of this child, lest he grow up and snatch the government from Pharaoh's hands."

The king, however, knowing full well how his

daughter loved this child, made the following reply to Balaam's long address:

"Let us call together the judges and the sages to ask their advice whether the child is to be slain or spared."

Pharaoh, accordingly, called together all the wise men of Egypt, and Jethro (Reuel), too, was among them. When the king asked the advice of his wise men concerning this child, most of them were of the same opinion as Balaam, that the child's removing the king's crown betokened his usurpation of Pharaoh's kingship. . . . But Jethro said to all the assembled:

"If it please the king let him place before the child a precious stone on one plate, and a coal of fire on another. Now if the child stretches forth his hand and grasps the precious stone—then we shall know that his taking off Pharaoh's crown was done intentionally, as the child possesses wisdom. However, if the child stretches forth his hand and grasps the burning coal, then we shall know that his act was not prompted by full consciousness, only because a baby likes shining things."

The advice pleased the king, and he ordered them to do accordingly. Now, when the coal and jewel were placed before Moses, he stretched forth his hand to grasp the precious stone, but immediately Gabriel appeared and he pushed away his

hand from the precious stone onto the coal. And when it burned his hand, Moses lifted up the coal of fire and touched his mouth with it, thereby burning part of his lips and tongue. . . . As a consequence of this, Moses saved his life but became a stutterer, slow of speech and slow of tongue. Thus God, Himself, had protected Moses who found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh. And Bithiah, the princess, had her adopted child educated in all manner of knowledge and wisdom, and Moses was thereupon brought up as a prince in the king's court.

4. *The Humble, Merciful Prince*

For many years Moses was brought up as a prince in Pharaoh's court together with the other young princes and noblemen. He was greatly beloved by Thermutis his adopted mother and all that knew him. But Moses' heart drew him to his real kinsmen at Goshen. One day, as Moses was a youth of about twenty, he went to Goshen where lived the children of Israel. There he saw the heavy burden under which his people groaned, and the hard labor his kinsmen had to do. He inquired of his people concerning this, and he was told of all the evil decrees that were issued shortly before his birth. He was also told of all the wicked advice Balaam gave against them as well as against himself, Bithiah's adopted son. Moses'

wrath was enkindled against Balaam and he swore to pay him accordingly. But Balaam finding out of Moses' feelings against him, fled from Egypt together with his sons and betook himself to the court of Kikanos, king of Cush (Ethiopia.)

The sight of his enslaved people touched Moses deeply. He cried out tearfully: "Woe is me for your miseries! Would to God that I died before I saw you thus suffering!" And he, not minding his high station at court, sent away his guards and put his shoulder to help his hard-working brothers. This one he helped carrying the clay, that one—to make the bricks. He also talked with the heavily-laden workers of a better day that was in store for them. He said to them:

"Be of good cheer! Relief is not far off from you. Calm follows storm, blue sky succeeds black clouds, sunshine comes after rain!"

Now Moses set about alleviating the burden of his people somewhat. He went to Pharaoh and said to him:

"My sire! I have a request to make of you and hope that you will not refuse it."

"Speak, my son," graciously said the king.

Then ventured Moses:

"Does my lord want that his slaves should die before their time?"

"Of course not," said Pharaoh.

"Your slaves will surely die," Moses said, "if

they be not afforded at least one day of rest during the week."

Pharaoh hearkened to Moses' petition and issued the following decree:

"To the Israelites:

"Thus said Pharaoh:

"Do your work and perform your service during six days of the week only, but on the seventh day of each week you shall cease your work. Thus shall you do always. Thus is the command of Pharaoh and Moses, son of Thermutis."

The day appointed by Moses for rest was the seventh day of the week, later proclaimed by God as Sabbath.

5. *"Who Appointed You Ruler Over Us? . . ."*

Once as Moses went visiting his people in Goshen, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. This embittered him greatly and he turned with his prayer to God: "O God, smite this Egyptian," and, looking around and seeing that there was no one in sight, Moses struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And to the bystanding Israelites who saw his deed he said: "God compared you to sand—and, as the sand can be moved noiselessly from place to place, so I ask of you to keep secret that which you saw me doing. Let nothing of this be heard outside."

Yet the wish expressed by Moses was not fulfilled by his people—the slaying of the Egyptian did not remain a secret for Moses' deed was actually brought to the king. And this is how it came about:

The day after Moses slew the Egyptian he went again to see the Israelites. The two brothers Dathan and Abiram, wishing to draw Moses into a quarrel, began to fight together. The plan succeeded, for as Moses saw Dathan raise his hand to strike Abiram, he shouted to him:

“Workman, why do you strike your friend?”

To which the wrongdoer maliciously replied:

“Young man, who appointed you judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”

Moses, to whose heart his people's suffering was so near, said now to himself with disdain: “I know now why my people suffer so much—there is no unity in them, they are guilty of slander and back-biting and of talebearing.”

Straightway the two brothers went and informed the king about the killing of the Egyptian by Moses, son of Thermutis. And Pharaoh was obliged to execute justice and Moses was ordered to be put to death. And accordingly Moses ascended the scaffold and a sharp sword was swiftly drawn across his neck ten times only to have it slip away, because his neck became as hard as

ivory. Moreover, God sent down His angel, Michael, who disguised himself as the hangman, and the real hangman, he changed into the likeness of Moses. And so Michael killed the transformed executioner with the very sword he had held for Moses. And in the meantime Moses made his escape. When it became known what happened, Pharaoh ordered his men to pursue Moses; but the pursuit was frustrated. For the king's troops were partly stricken with blindness and partly with dumbness. The dumb could give no information and the blind could not go to the place, though they knew where. And an angel of God took Moses to a place forty days distance from Egypt, and he wandered and wandered until he came to the land of Cush (Ethiopia).

6. *Moses, King of Ethiopia*

When Moses arrived in Ethiopia there broke out a war between Ethiopia and the nations of the East that had been subject to it until then. Kikanos, the Ethiopian king, advanced against the enemy with a great army. He left Balaam and his two sons, Jannes and Jambres, behind, to keep guard over his capital and take charge of the people at home. While the king was away at the front, Balaam took the opportunity of Kikanos' absence to win the people over to his side and be proclaimed king. So Balaam became king and Jannes

and Jambres were set over the army as generals. And in order to cut Kikanos off from his capital, Balaam and his sons besieged the city so that none could enter it against his will. They built high walls on two sides, on the third side they dug many canals into which they conducted the water of the great river that girds the whole land of Ethiopia. And on the fourth side of the city, Balaam and his sons had collected by their witchcraft a swarm of snakes, scorpions and adders. Thus, none could depart, and none could enter the city.

Kikanos, in the meantime, succeeded in subjugating the rebellious nations. And when he returned at the head of his victorious army and saw the high city walls from a distance, he said to his men:

"When the inhabitants of the city saw that we tarried too long, they have raised the city walls to fortify themselves against the Canaanites, that they may not enter the city."

But when they approached the city gates and found them locked, they cried out to the guards: "Open the gates to your king!" But the gates were not opened, for Balaam instructed the guards not to open the gates for anyone, unless he ordered them to.

Now a civil war broke out between the king's army and Balaam's people. And Kikanos lost one

hundred and thirty men. The next day the war continued, while the king and his people were stationed on the other side of the river. And this day, Kikanos lost thirty riders, who, mounted on their horses, tried to swim across the stream. Then Kikanos ordered rafts to be constructed for the transporting of his army. When the rafts were completed, and while attempting to pass on them, they were submerged, and the water swirling round and round as though driven by mill-wheels, swept away the hundred men who were upon the ten rafts. On the third day, they tried to assault the city from the side upon which the magic reptiles swarmed, but they failed, for the reptiles killed one hundred and seventy men of the army. So Kikanos gave up attacking the city but laid siege to it—a siege that lasted nine years.

It was at that time while the siege was on, that Moses appeared at Ethiopia, at Kikanos camp. He at once found favor with the king and the whole army, for he endeared himself to everybody, as he exercised a wonderful attraction on all who saw him. He was as slender as a palm-tree, his countenance shone as the morning sun, and as a lion's so was his strength, and his swiftness was like that of the eagle. The king's attachment was so deep toward him that he appointed Moses commander-in-chief of his forces, and adviser to himself.

Nine years lasted the siege, and at the end of the ninth year, Kikanos became very sick and died on the seventh day of his illness. His servants embalmed and buried him at the north gate of the city leading toward the land of Egypt. Over his grave, they erected a magnificent mausoleum, strong and high, upon whose walls they engraved all the mighty deeds and battles of the dead king.

After the death of Kikanos the Ethiopian king, his men became greatly grieved on account of the war. One said to the other: "What are we to do now. It is already nine years since we have been away from our homes. If we fight against Balaam—many of us will perish, and if we continue the siege we shall also perish. When the news about the death of our king will be spread, all our enemies will come to us to attack us. Now the only thing we can do, is to set a new king over us—then we shall cause the city to surrender to us."

However, they could find none except Moses fit to be their king. Accordingly, they hastened, and each man stripped off his upper garment and casting them in one heap, they made a high platform thereof on the top of which they put Moses. Then they blew with trumpets, calling out: "Long live the king!" Thus did Moses become king over the people of Ethiopia.

Moses was twenty-seven years old when he be-

came king over Cush (Ethiopia) and he reigned for a period of forty years. On the seventh day of his reign, all the people assembled and came to him to ask his advice—what to do to the city they were besieging these nine years. And the king said to them:

“If you will hearken to my words and do as I command, the city will soon be delivered in our hands. Every one of you will return to his home, wife and children. Now do this: Go to the forest and each one of you fetch a young stork. Take these young storks, rear them until they grow up, teaching them to fly as the hawk does.”

All the people did according to the words of Moses, and after the young storks had grown to full size, he ordered them to be starved for three days. On the third day, the king said to them:

“Let every man put on his armor and gird his sword upon him, while he mount his horse. Now each one of you shall take along his starved stork. We shall fight against the city opposite the side where the reptiles are.”

Thus they did. And when they came to the appointed place, the king said to them:

“Let each one of you send forth his young stork to descend upon the serpents.”

They did so. And the starved birds swooped down and devoured all the reptiles. After the serpents were removed in this manner, the way to

the city was cleared and Moses and the Ethiopians entered the city.

When Balaam saw that the city had fallen into the hands of the besiegers, he escaped together with his two sons, and his eight brothers, and they found refuge in Egypt, where they exercised their magic art.

7. *The Children of Ephraim*

It came to pass at that time while Moses was still at Ethiopia, that a man from the tribe of Ephraim, Jignon by name, came to the Israelites and said to them:

"God of our fathers appeared to me and said: 'The time of My people's deliverance from Egypt has come. Now, therefore, go and deliver My people from Egyptian bondage.'"

But the Israelites did not believe Jignon, for he did not speak to them with the words of redemption, that Jacob told them that the deliverer would use. But the children of Ephraim believed in Jignon and they also trusted in their own strength. Accordingly, they armed themselves, and left Egypt by force. They did not take along with them any provisions for their journey, only gold and silver, for they said: "We can always buy food. And if they refuse to sell us food we can force them to."

The Ephraimites went and reached before long

the city of Gath, in Philistia. They met shepherds keeping their flock in the field, and said to them:

"Will you please sell us some sheep, for we are hungry."

The shepherds said:

"We cannot sell you any, since the flock is not ours."

The Ephraimites, then, wanted to take the sheep by force. But the shepherds cried out aloud so that all the people of the city gathered and waged war against the strangers. The battle was severe and many fell dead on both sides. On the following day, did the people of Gath send word to the other Philistines to come to their aid in their war against the Ephraimites. When the other Philistines arrived, they, with united strength, smote the Ephraimites so that all of them but ten were killed. And the entire valley was filled with their corpses. (They were those dead bodies that the prophet, Ezekiel, revived in the Valley of the Dried-up Bones, many hundreds of years hence.)

This punishment came to the Ephraimites because they hurried to leave Egypt before God sent them the real deliverer.

8. *Moses Leaves Ethiopia; Marries Zipporah*

When Monarchos, son of Kikanos, grew up, Moses gave over the kingship in his hands, and himself left Ethiopia. The Ethiopians dismissed

Moses with great honor and gave him many presents.

As Moses was still afraid to go to Egypt, he decided to go to Midian. (And Midian was a city named after one of Abraham's sons by Keturah.) Now, in Midian, there lived Jethro, for many years a priest to the local deity. But as time went on, he grew more and more convinced of the futility of worshipping idols. As his priesthood became loathsome to him, Jethro called his townspeople to him and said to them:

"My people! Until now I have performed your service to your idols. Now I am getting old for the duties of a priest, choose, therefore, a younger man than I to be your priest."

The people of Midian suspected Jethro's hidden meaning and became very angry. They had, moreover, put a ban on him and his household, that no one should dare to do any service for them, not even to pasture his flocks. And in consequence of this excommunication, Jethro's daughters had to keep the flocks of their father themselves.

In addition, none of the shepherds would let the daughters of Jethro water their flock, so they had to start watering their sheep before any of the shepherds came to the watering place. However, the shepherds always caused Jethro's daughters annoyance by driving them from one place to another.

When Moses arrived in Midian he sat at the well before the city. Soon the daughters of Jethro came to water their sheep, but immediately there appeared the other shepherds who began to drive them away. Then Moses stood up and protected the girls and watered their sheep. That day the girls came home earlier. Jethro, their father, asked them:

"How is it that you have come back so early today?"

And they replied: "An Egyptian protected us from the shepherds, and besides, he drew water for us and watered the flock."

Then said Jethro:

"Where is the man? Why have you left him? Invite him to our house that he may eat with us."

Moses was called to Jethro's house and consented to make his home there. For one of the daughters of the man attracted Moses' notice from the first, that was Zipporah. Zipporah, too, loved Moses. But when he made her the proposal of marriage she refused him, saying:

"There is a miraculous rod in my father's garden, and with that rod my father tests everyone that wishes to marry me. And until now all my suitors who came near that rod perished. And because I love you, I do not want you to be tested by that rod," concluded Zipporah.

That rod was created by God in the twilight

of the first Sabbath eve. He gave it to Adam. Adam transmitted it to Enoch; Enoch to Noah; Noah to Shem. Shem bequeathed it to Abraham; Abraham to Isaac; Isaac to Jacob; Jacob to Joseph. When Joseph died, the Egyptians brought it to Pharaoh's palace. When Jethro was at Pharaoh's palace, as one of his scribes, he desired the rod. (Ten mysterious letters were graven on it and also the Ineffable Name.) Jethro brought the rod to Midian where it lay for many years. One day, when Jethro was walking in the garden carrying the staff, it stuck in the ground. And when he attempted to draw it out again, he found that it had sprouted, and blossomed forth. With this rod, Jethro tested all who wished to marry Zipporah.

Without much ado Moses went forth to Jethro's garden, found that marvelous sapphire rod, uprooted it and brought it to Jethro.

Thereupon, Jethro gave his daughter, Zipporah, to Moses as wife.

9. Israel's Affliction Increasing

While Moses was living happily at Midian, the cup of misery of his people in Egypt was becoming filled to its brim. . . .

God punished Pharaoh for his cruelty toward the children of Israel and He afflicted him with the plague of leprosy which covered his whole body. But instead of being humbled by this pun-

ishment, Pharaoh took counsel with his magicians—how to afflict Israel the more. The magicians advised Pharaoh that the only way he could remedy his leprosy was by bathing in the blood of Hebrew babies. . . . Now there came a terrible time for Israel, worse even than when the male children were cast into the Nile. The king's officers would spread over Goshen and snatch Hebrew babies from their mother's breasts, and in the blood of the innocents the plagued king bathed. But all was in vain, the king's disease increased so that his entire body became full of boils, and he suffered more than before.

In the meantime, while he thus suffered, the report was brought to him that the Hebrews were idling in their forced labor. This news augmented the king's suffering and increased his ire. "Now that I am ill," thought the invalid, "they make fun of me and mock at my affliction!" Whereupon, he ordered his chariot harnessed so as to go down into Goshen himself to find out whether that report be true.

But now a great accident took place. When Pharaoh and his men were approaching Goshen, they had to go through a narrow passage. The other horses, running rapidly through the pass, pressed upon each other until the king's horse fell, turning over the chariot, while the horses trampled over its rider. . . . The king's flesh was

torn from him and he lay there in intense pain and suffering.

The king, as well as his queen, Alpharaonith, knew that his end was near, and the princes and nobles gathered to make choice of a successor to reign in his stead. Pharaoh had three sons: 'Atro, the first born, the second Adikam, and the third, Moroyon. And two daughters he had: Bithiah and 'Achuziah. The first born of his sons was an idiot, a careless and irresponsible fellow; Adikam, the second son, was very clever and cunning, also versed in all the wisdom of Egypt, but he was very ugly looking, fat and very short. (A cubit and a span was his height, while his beard reached to his knees.)

The king resolved that Adikam should reign in his stead after his death. And his malady increased greatly, so that his body emitted a stench like that of a carcass cast into the field in summer time in the heat of the sun. . . . Seeing that his disease was so bad, Pharaoh ordered Adikam to be crowned king at once. This was done. And the sick Pharaoh lived for three more years in shame and in disgrace, a loathing to all who saw him. When he died they buried him in the cemetery of the kings, in Zoan, but they did not mummify his body, but buried him in haste.

Adikam was twenty years old when he succeeded his father. The people of Egypt called him

Pharaoh, as was their custom, but his wise men nicknamed him Abuz (meaning "short"), on account of his smallness of stature. The new Pharaoh surpassed his father Malol and all the former kings in wickedness. He made the yoke of Israel even heavier. His first act was this. He went into Goshen and had it proclaimed:

"Attention! Everyone must finish his daily task in making the bricks. No one may make less than his usual requirement. He who fails to comply with this ordinance and his number be deficient, his child will be put in the wall to make up for the number of the missing bricks. . . ."

Pharaoh placed taskmasters over the Hebrews who forced most of them to put their own children into the walls of the building. The father would place his child in the wall, and cover him with mortar, all the while weeping, and his tears running down upon the immured child. . . .

A very bad time came to Israel. The Hebrews sighed every day on account of their great suffering. They prayed to God and He hearkened to their prayers, and seeing their affliction, He resolved to hasten their deliverance from Egypt.

"I shall surely deliver My people from the hands of their oppressors. My deliverer will I send to them," was the decision of the God of Israel.

CHAPTER XXV

MOSES' MISSION

1. *The Burning Bush; God's Message to Moses*

MOSES was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, and he watched over the sheep with loving care. He led the young ones to pasture first, that they might have the tender, juicy grass for their food; the somewhat older ones, he pastured next, allowing them to graze on the herbs suitable for them; lastly he would pasture the fully-grown sheep, for they could also graze on the hard grass that was left. Moses further proved what a tender heart he had for the animals put in his care.

Once a little kid escaped from the flock. Moses ran after it to return it to the fold, for he said, "The poor kid might get lost and perish of hunger or thirst." As he followed it, he noticed that the kid, tired and exhausted, stopped at a spring of water to quench its thirst. Moses understood that the kid escaped from the flock because it wanted to drink. Thereupon he gathered it into his arms and said to it:

"My beloved kid! I did not know that you were thirsty and ran for water. I know now that you're weary, my poor kid!"

And thus he carried it to the flock as a mother carries a babe, with great tenderness and with love. And God, seeing this tenderness of Moses, said:

"You, Moses, have compassion on flock belonging to a man. You, therefore, shall pasture My people, Israel!"

As Moses used to choose an open meadow to keep his flock, in order to prevent his sheep from grazing on private property, he used to wander quite a distance away. He reached the place of Horeb, known later as the Mount of God. There an angel of God appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a thorn bush. He looked up and saw the bush burned by fire, and it was not wholly consumed. . . .

Moses said to himself:

"Is not the thorn bush symbolic of my people Israel? The thorn bush is the lowliest of all species, so is the condition of Israel!—Let me see why is not the bush totally consumed."

And as Moses was about to step near the bush, he heard a voice calling to him—a voice that sounded like the voice of his father, Amram:

"Moses, Moses!"

"Here I am," answered the shepherd, "what is your wish, father?"

And the voice continued:

"Moses. I am not your father. I am the God of your fathers, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob. Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet for the place where you are standing is sacred ground."

Moses did accordingly, and hearing God's voice he hid his face, for he was afraid to look up to God. And the voice continued:

"I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are enslaved in Egypt, and have heard their cry of distress because of their oppressors, and I know their sorrows. Come, now, Moses, I will send you to Pharaoh in order that you may bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

In great awe, Moses said:

"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and should bring the Israelites out of Egypt."

Whereupon God said to Moses:

"Moses, My servant! You are very meek and I will reward you for your modesty. I will deliver the whole land of Egypt in your hand. I will be with you. And this is the sign that I send you.—When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship Me on this mountain."

But still Moses insisted:

"Behold, I am going to the children of Israel and say to them: 'God of your forefathers sent me

to you; and if they ask me 'what is His name,' what shall I answer them?"

God said to him:

"You wish to know My Name?—My Name is in accordance with My acts. When I judge My creatures, I am called *Elohim*; when I rise up to battle against the sinners I am *Zebaoth* (Lord of Hosts); when I wait with long suffering patience for the repentance of the sinner, My name is *El Shaddai*; when I have mercy upon all creatures of the world I am *Adonai*. But to the children of Israel you shall say, 'My name is I AM THAT I AM'—I am He that WAS, that IS, and that ever WILL BE. I am He that is with them in this subjugation and He that will be with them in the subjugation to come."

To which Moses made the following remark:

"Sovereign of the Universe! Time enough for the trouble when it comes."

God agreed with Moses and said to him: "My words about the future were meant for you alone, and not for the Israelites. To Israel you shall say: 'God of your forefathers sent me to deliver you out of this land of Egypt.' Also say to them in My Name: '*I have surely visited you,*' and they will believe you. For Jacob, their father, had given his sons the following three signs before he died, concerning the deliverer that I would send to them. He would proclaim the Ineffable Name, appoint

elders, and use the words *Pakod Pakadti*—('I have surely visited') in addressing his people.

"The people will certainly hearken to your voice, Moses. And you, together with the elders that you will appoint, shall go to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him: 'God of our fathers has appeared to us. Now let us go three days' journey in the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to God.' And I know that Pharaoh will not hearken unto you, and will not let you go, unless he is compelled by a mighty power. Therefore I will exercise my power and overwhelm Egypt with all the marvelous deeds that I will do in its midst. After that, he will let you go. And when you go out from Egypt you will not go empty-handed. I will give Israel favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and they will borrow gold and silver articles from them. And they will leave Egypt with great riches, as I had promised to Abraham: 'Your descendants will be strangers in a land not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them. . . . And the nation, whom they shall serve will I judge and afterwards shall they come out with great substance.' "

In spite of all these words of God Moses was not yet ready to accept the mission that God wanted to impose upon him. He persistently said:

"But, behold, they will not believe me nor hearken unto my voice for they will say: 'God has not appeared to you.' "

Whereupon God said to Moses:

"What is in your hand, Moses?"

"A rod!"

"You ought to be punished with this very rod for having suspected My people of lack of faith. The children of Israel are believers, sons of believers. However, this is the sign: Take your rod and cast it on the ground."

Moses did so and the rod became a serpent, and he fled away from before it. But God said to him: "Put forth your hand and take it by the tail."

Moses put forth his hand and laid hold of it and it became a rod in his hand.

"This sign shall you perform before them and they will believe you," said God. But still Moses insisted:

"O Lord, I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech and slow in expressing myself. O Lord, send whomsoever Thou wantest, but not me."

God's anger was enkindled against Moses and He said to him:

"Who has given man a mouth? or who makes one deaf or dumb or blind or able to see, is it not I, God? Now, go, and I will be with you and teach you what you shall speak; and your brother, Aaron, shall act as your spokesman to Pharaoh and to Israel."

Then did Moses go to Jethro, his father-in-law, and told him all that happened to him, and how

God had chosen him to be the deliverer of His people. And Jethro sent Moses to Egypt and permitted him to take along his wife and two sons. Jethro gave Moses his blessing, he said:

"Go in peace, enter Egypt in peace, and leave that land in peace!"

2. *Back to Egypt*

The Divine voice that spoke to Moses in the wilderness, came also to Aaron in Egypt, saying to him:

"Go into the wilderness to meet your brother, Moses!"

The greeting of the two brothers was very cordial, and there was no envy or jealousy between them, though Moses, the younger of the two was chosen by the Eternal to be the redeemer of Israel.

Aaron met his brother, kissed him and embraced him and inquired about all his whereabouts in the time he was away from Egypt. Seeing his wife and infants with him, Aaron said:

"Who are these that are traveling with you?"

"They are my wife, Zipporah, and my two sons, Gershom and Eliezer," answered Moses.

"Whither do you go with them?"

"To Egypt."

"To Egypt!" retorted Aaron, "we are sorry for those who are there already and you wish to bring thither some more?"

Moses recognized that Aaron was right and therefore, sent his wife and children back to Midian.

Now Moses related to Aaron all that God had told him in the vision at the burning bush, and Aaron heard this message of deliverance and was happy.

When both brothers came to Egypt, their first deed was to gather all the elders of the people. Before them Moses performed the miracles God showed him—those miracles which were to be his credentials that God sent him to His people, to be their deliverer. Yet the wonders Moses showed them were not as acceptable to them as the words of redemption he used. Moses said in God's name; "*I have surely visited you.*" Serah, the daughter of Asher, who still lived, because of her grandfather's blessing, told all the people that these words were the secret mark designating the redeemer.

Moses, thereupon, invited the elders to go to Pharaoh with him, but they lacked the courage to appear with him. Though they started out with Moses, they dropped off furtively one by one as they approached the palace of the king. And when Moses and Aaron appeared at Pharaoh's court, they found themselves alone, deserted by all the others. (For this deed they were punished later,

when God gave Moses the Ten Words. Then, were they not allowed to ascend the Mount of God.)

3. *Moses and Aaron in Pharaoh's Palace*

Pharaoh's palace was surrounded by a great army. The palace had four hundred entrances, one hundred on each side, and each of them was guarded by sixty thousand soldiers. In addition to this vast host, each entrance to the palace was guarded by fierce lions, tigers and bears. And none could enter if he were not invited, for the beast-tamers would not come to lead them away. But when Moses and Aaron came to the entrance, he lifted up his rod and immediately all the wild animals prostrated themselves before them, licking their feet as dogs do at the approach of their master.

As Moses and Aaron entered the palace, they found seventy scribes busy with Pharaoh's correspondence, which was carried on in seventy languages. At the sight of the messengers of Israel, they started up in great awe, for the two men resembled angels. Their stature was like unto the cedars of Lebanon, their countenances radiated light as the sun. . . . And in terror, the scribes dropped quill and papyrus, and prostrated themselves before Moses and Aaron.

And the two messengers of God suddenly appeared before Pharaoh and said to him:

"The God of the Hebrews appeared to us, and said: 'Let My people go a three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto Me.'"

But Pharaoh answered calmly:

"What is the name of your God? Wherein does His strength consist? How many countries, provinces, and cities has He under His sway? In how many wars was He victorious? How many people did He subjugate? How great is His army when He goes to war?"

To which Moses made the following reply:

"His strength and His power fill the whole world. His voice hews but flames of fire. His words break mountains into pieces. The heaven is His throne, and the earth, His foot-stool. His bow is fire, His arrows are flame; His spears—torches; His shield—the clouds; His sword—the lightning-flash. He created the mountains and the valleys. He causes rain and dew to descend and He causes plants to grow from the ground and He nourishes and sustains the whole world. He makes kings to reign and to lose their kingships. . . ."

Pharaoh answered and said:

"You are telling lies. I have created myself. And if you say that your God causes rain and dew to descend—I have the Nile to irrigate my land. . . ."

Whereupon Pharaoh sent to fetch the books of the chronicles of the kingdom from his archives,

wherein were recorded the gods of all the nations of the world. When the recorder brought the books, Pharaoh read off the names of the various gods: The gods of Moab, of Ammon, of Zidon and so on. But he did not find mentioned the name of the Hebrew God.

"I do not find your god's name anywhere in my books," exclaimed the Egyptian king.

Aaron said to Pharaoh:

"You are seeking the living God in the graves of the dead! . . ."

Pharaoh asked his wise men concerning the God of Israel and mockingly they said:

"We have been told that the Hebrew God is the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings. . . ."

Then Pharaoh said to Moses and Aaron:

"I do not know your God. And His people I shall not let go."

Whereupon God decreed:

"A day will come when Pharaoh will say: 'God is righteous and I sinned against Him,' and to Moses and Aaron he will say: 'Go, leave my land together with your people.'"

4. The Ten Plagues

Pharaoh gave out a decree to increase the suffering of the Israelites. He said: "Let heavier work be laid upon the men, that they may be kept so busy that they will not pay attention to idle

words." Thereupon, the taskmasters were ordered to require from the people the usual number of bricks, but that straw should not be given them for the brick-making. "Let them go and gather straw for themselves wherever they may find." Another decree was that the children of Israel were no longer allowed to rest on the Sabbath-day. And the Hebrews suffered not only at the hands of the head of the government and its officials, but also at the hands of all the people of Egypt. For when the Hebrews wandered to get straw, they were mistreated by the Egyptians when caught in their fields.

When the overseers of the Israelites met Moses and Aaron they said to them:

"Let God look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in the sight of Pharaoh—with your words of redemption you have given them a sword in their hands to kill us. . . ."

Now, the overseers of Israel were appointed by the taskmasters to whom they were responsible. And they were beaten and abused. And Moses, seeing the increased affliction of his people said to God:

"Lord God, why hast Thou brought calamity upon this people, why hast Thou sent me? For, since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy Name he wronged more this people, and Thou hast done nothing whatever to deliver them."

And God answered Moses:

"Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for compelled by a mighty power, he shall surely let them go, and compelled by a mighty power he shall drive them out of his land."

And God said to Moses again:

Pharaoh is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh early in the morning, as he is going out on the water, and stand by the bank of the Nile to meet him. You shall say to him: "Let my people go that they may worship Me in the wilderness but so far you have not listened. God declares: By this you shall know that I am God. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand and they shall be changed into blood. The fish, too, that are in the Nile shall die, and the Nile shall become foul, so that the Egyptians will loathe to drink its water."

Then Moses lifted up the rod and in the presence of Pharaoh and his officers, he struck the waters that were in the Nile, and all its waters were changed into blood. The fish, too, that were in the Nile died, and the river became so foul that the Egyptians could not drink its water.

Thus did God begin to send His plagues unto Pharaoh. And when the first plague passed and Pharaoh still did not send the people, God sent upon the Egyptians the noisy, croaking frogs. The third plague was that of lice, which covered all

the land and pierced their bodies like darts. A fourth plague was—a mixture of various wild beasts. The Egyptians refused to let Israel go, and God sent upon them a pestilence that destroyed their cattle. Even then Pharaoh's heart was obdurate, and God visited upon Egypt the sixth plague—burning blains. And another God sent upon them—a plague that destroyed all they had in field—hail storm, such as had never been in Egypt from the day that it was founded until that time. And the eighth plague was also a severe one—the plague of locusts, which darkened the land of Egypt. Those locusts ate that which was left from the hail, and they also destroyed all the plants of the land.

These plagues did not soften Pharaoh's heart. And God sent upon the Egyptians a complete darkness. No one could see nor move about for three days. But the Israelites had light in their dwellings. Then did God send upon the Egyptians the tenth plague—that of the slaying of every first-born—and it was then that Pharaoh's heart was softened and he let Israel go out from his land.

Now these ten plagues God meted out to the Egyptians as measure for measure for their actions against the Israelites: Because the Egyptians forced the Hebrews to draw water for them, God turned their water into blood. Frogs He sent upon them because they used to say to the Israelites: "Go

and catch fish for us." So He brought frogs up against them to swarm in their kneading troughs and in their bed-chambers. The third plague was sent upon them because the Egyptians had said to the Israelites: "Go and sweep our houses, clean our courtyards and our streets." So God changed the very dust of the air into lice, so that the vermin lay piled up in heaps on the ground. And when the Egyptians put on fresh garments, they were at once infested with those insects. And because the Egyptians would send the Hebrews into the forests to hunt animals for their circuses, God sent upon them hordes of all sorts of animals: lions, wolves, panthers, bears and others. These overran the houses of the Egyptians. An Egyptian, thereupon, would entrust his five children to the care of an Israelite, and when he would take them for a walk—a lion would come and snatch away one, a wolf would carry off the second, a bear would take away the third, a tiger—the fourth, and a serpent would choke the last. The Israelite would return to the Egyptian alone only to tell of the sad news. The pestilence among the Egyptian cattle came as punishment for making the Israelites serve as their shepherds. And because of making the Israelites their bathhouse keepers, who had to wash and bathe them, God sent upon the Egyptians the disease of blains. For having sent the Israelites into their fields to work, plowing and sowing, hail

was sent upon them. Because they had made them their vineyard keepers—God sent upon them the plague of locusts. Darkness, that evil plague, God sent upon the Egyptians to make them atone for the dark dungeons into which they had put the Israelites. (The affliction of the darkness served another purpose: there were many wicked people among the Israelites who would not listen to Moses' words of redemption and who refused to be redeemed, and so God determined to put them out of the way, and they died during those days.) And the last and worst plague of all—the slaying of the first-born—God meted out to the Egyptians because they had killed off so many of the Hebrew babes.

5. The Israelites Leave Egypt

“ . . . and afterwards they will go out with great substance.” This promise that God made to Abraham was about to be fulfilled. At the time of the plague of darkness, the Hebrews who happened to visit the houses of the Egyptians saw where they kept their gold and silver vessels, but they did not dare to take anything themselves, although the Egyptians would not see. Now, before Moses announced to Pharaoh the tenth plague, he asked the Israelites to ask of the Egyptians their vessels of gold and silver. When they did so, and the Egyptians said they had none, the Hebrews told

them the places wherein they kept treasures hidden. And, as the Egyptians wondered how the Hebrews knew of their secret places, they told them how they saw all their treasure in the period of darkness. Realizing how honest their Israelitish neighbors were, they gave all they asked for. (And this paid in part for the work the Israelites tendered to the Egyptians.)

When Egypt was afflicted with the heavy darkness, Pharaoh sent for Moses and said to him:

"Go, worship God as you asked, but let your herds remain behind."

But Moses said:

"Even *you* must give us cattle that we may sacrifice to our God, for we don't know with what we must serve our God. And our cattle, too, must go with us, not a hoof shall be left behind. . . ."

To which Pharaoh impatiently replied:

"Go away from me. Take care that you never appear in my presence again, for on the day you appear in my presence you shall die."

Moses replied:

"You have spoken truly! I shall never appear in your presence again." And he continued:

"Thus declares God:

"About midnight I will go through all of Egypt, and all the eldest sons in the land of Egypt shall die, from the eldest son of Pharaoh who sits upon his throne, even to the eldest son of the slave girl

who is behind the mill, and all the first-born of cattle. There shall be a great wail of lamentation throughout all the land of Egypt, such as has never been and never shall be again. But not a single dog will bark against any of the Israelites that you may know that God *does* make a distinction between the Egyptians and between the Israelites. And all these your servants shall then come to me and bow down before me saying: 'Go away together with all the people that follow you.' After that I will depart."

And he went from Pharaoh in hot anger.

Now at midnight God destroyed all the eldest sons in the land of Egypt, from the eldest son of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the eldest son of the captive who was in prison. Then Pharaoh rose in the night, together with all his courtiers and all Egyptians, for there was a great cry of distress throughout all the land, because there was not a house where there was not one dead.

Pharaoh ran to Moses' house now, for he knew that he would not come to him since he said that he would not see his face anymore. He did not know where Moses lived and had great difficulty, and lost much time in looking for the house of Moses. The Hebrew boys he met on the way while looking for Moses played practical jokes on him and his courtiers, in misdirecting them.

At that time, Moses, Aaron and all Israel were

at the paschal meal, eating and drinking and making themselves merry waiting to be redeemed. Pharaoh was also accompanied by Bithiah (Thermutis) that she might ask Moses to intercede for the Egyptians with God, and that the Israelites should immediately leave Egypt. And as Bithiah accused Moses of ingratitude to her, Moses said to her:

“God has sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians, has any evil touched you? Did even one plague affect you?”

But Bithiah said:

“Of what avail is my security to me when I see the king, my brother, and all his household and his servants in this evil plight, seeing their first-born perishing with those of all Egypt.”

And Moses said:

“Pharaoh and his people would not hearken to the words of God, therefore did this evil come upon them.”

However, Moses said to Pharaoh:

“In spite of all you have done, you may still be spared, if you wish to learn what I teach you. Go outside and raise your voice, saying: “You children of Israel! You are your own masters. Prepare for your journey and depart from my people. Hitherto you were my slaves, henceforth you will be slaves of God.”

Pharaoh did accordingly and proclaimed the

redemption of Israel three times, and God caused his voice to be heard throughout all of Egypt, so that all should know that Israel was released from his bondage. But the king insisted upon the immediate release of the children of Israel, and Moses said to him:

“Are we thieves to sneak away in the night?”

When Pharaoh said that he feared their staying any longer, lest he, who was first born, should die, too. Moses said to him:

“Fear not, you will not die yet, as God wants to show you greater signs and miracles. But we shall depart in the morning, while Egypt looks on.”

CHAPTER XXVI

"OUT OF THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE"

I. *Joseph's Coffin*

THREE days before the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, Moses took up the task of finding Joseph's remains. For he knew that Israel could not leave Egypt without taking along the coffin of Joseph. But his trouble was in vain. The coffin was nowhere to be found. Serah, the daughter of Asher, whom Jacob had blessed with immortality met Moses tired and exhausted, and in answer to her question about the cause of his weariness, Moses told her of his vain work and fruitless search. Serah took him to the Nile river and told him that the leaden coffin made for Joseph by the Egyptians had been sunk there after having been sealed on all sides. The Egyptians had done this at the instigation and the help of the magicians, who, knowing full well that the Israelites could not leave the country without that coffin, had therefore put it in a place from where it could not be removed.

Moses, while standing at the Nile, made the following invocation:

"Joseph, Joseph, the time for Israel's redemption has come, the time of which you said 'God will surely visit you and you shall carry my bones with you.' The Shekhinah lingers here only for your sake and the clouds of glory await your coming. If you appear, well and good, and if not, we are clear from our oath."

The invocation finished, the coffin appeared on the surface of the water. Thus, while Israel had been busy gathering gold and silver of the Egyptians, Moses had been busy with finding Joseph's coffin, and his happiness was great that he could fulfil Joseph's wish. Moses then took the coffin of Joseph with him to be with Israel all through their wanderings in the wilderness, until their taking possession of the Promised Land.

2. Israel's Deliverance from Egyptian Bondage

Pharaoh and the Egyptians let their dead lie unburied while they hurried to help the Israelites load their possessions on wagons, to get them out of their country as quickly as possible. When they left, the Israelites took with them, besides their own cattle, the sheep and the oxen that Pharaoh had ordered his nobles to give them as presents. The king also forced his noblemen to beg pardon of the Israelites for all they had suffered. "Now

depart!" said Pharaoh to the Israelites: "I want nothing from you, but that you incur God's favor for me that I be saved from death."

Moreover, the hatred of the Egyptians toward the Israelites changed now to great love. They conceived affection and friendship for them and had actually forced upon them presents of gold, silver and clothing to take along on their journey, although they had already given the Israelites presents before.

The Israelites now set out on foot from Raameses, from Goshen and from all Egypt to go to Succoth, and a mixed multitude (of Egyptians) went up with them and they had a great many sheep and cattle. And Israel's trust in God was so profound that they followed Moses uncomplainingly into the wilderness without supplying themselves with provisions. The only food they did take along were the remains of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs they had prepared for the night of redemption—the night when God passed over the homes of the Israelites when He slew the Egyptian first-born. This unleavened bread was so dear to them, since God had commanded them to bake it, that instead of putting it on their animals of burden, they carried it themselves on their own shoulders.

(Now the actual time of Israel's enslavement in Egypt was two hundred and ten years, but God

reckoned the days of the enslavement from the time of His promising Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a land not theirs.)

The Israelites left Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month—Nissan—and all of the Egyptians were busy burying their dead for three days. When the three days were up, some of the Egyptians regretted the departure of Israel and they said one to the other: "What have we done that we let the Israelites escape from serving us." So they followed after the Hebrews and finding them encamped at Etham on the border of the wilderness, eating, drinking and enjoying themselves, they said to them:

"Did you not say, 'we want to go a three days' journey in the wilderness' but you have not kept your promise."

Moses answered the delegation:

"Our God who delivered us out of the hands of Pharaoh told us not to go back to Egypt but to go to the land flowing with milk and honey which He promised to our ancestors."

Whereupon the Egyptians returned to Pharaoh and said to him:

"Our slaves, the Hebrews, have left us never to return. Now let us pursue them."

And Pharaoh, too, regretting his having sent the Israelites away, made ready his chariot and took

his people with him, and he pursued the Israelites, whom he overtook at the Red Sea.

3. *Crossing of the Red Sea*

When Pharaoh drew near the Red Sea, the Israelites lifted up their eyes and saw the Egyptians marching after them. Now the Israelites were greatly terrified for in front of them was the Red Sea and in back of them—the Egyptians. And all the people cried unto Moses:

“Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you misled us by bringing us out of Egypt? What are we to do now—should we run to the wilderness—wild beasts will devour us; should we continue our journey onward—the sea is in front of us; should we go back to Egypt—we shall be treated worse than heretofore.”

Thus did Israel lose faith in God who went before them with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day to lead them the way. However, the Israelites divided themselves into four parts: the first division, which was composed of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Issachar said:

“Rather shall we cast ourselves in the sea in freedom, than go back to Egypt as slaves.”

And Moses said to them:

“Stand still and see the salvation of God which He will work for you today.”

But the second part of them, the sons of Zebulun, Benjamin and Naphtali said:

"Let us return into Egypt. Perhaps our masters, the Egyptians, will have pity upon us and spare us."

To these Moses said:

"Fear not: for as surely as you now see the Egyptians you shall never see them again forever."

Hearing such words the sons of Judah and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) became courageous and said to Moses:

"Let us go and fight against the Egyptians who have pursued us."

To them Moses replied:

"The Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace."

But the last division, the sons of Dan, Gad and Asher said:

"Let us go down into the Egyptian camp to confuse them."

And Moses said to them:

"Do not fight against your enemies—you stand and pray to God to help you."

Accordingly, the Israelites prayed to God:

"O Lord, help Thy people whom Thou hast delivered from Egypt!"

And Moses, also prayed to God, saying:

"Help, O Lord, Thy people—Israel!"

Thereupon, God answered Moses:

"Wherefore do you cry unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."

Then did the Israelites approach the sea, but as soon as the Reubenites saw the clay on the shore they said to the Simeonites:

"In Egypt we sank in clay and mortar aplenty, now Moses wants us to sink in clay. We shall not go!"

Many of the people caught up the words "we shall not go." But the sons of Benjamin became courageous and were about to jump into the sea, fulfilling Moses' command. And it was then that God said to Moses:

"Lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it."

Moses did accordingly. And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud removed from before them and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel, and there was the cloud and the darkness here, yet it gave it light by night there. And when Moses stretched forth his hand with the rod over the sea, that the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. . . .

Now the children of Israel went into the midst

of the sea upon the dry ground, and the waters became as a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians, seeing that the Israelites were crossing the sea as if on dry land followed them saying:

“Now that the Hebrew God made a road in the sea, let us run after the Israelites, and overtake them!”

But God looked upon the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud and He threw them into confusion. He also took off their chariot wheels and made them to drive heavily, because of the soft clay of the bottom of the sea, and the waters that rushed back before the Israelites began to come back on the Egyptians who ran away in confusion shouting:

“Let us flee from the Israelites, for God fights for them against us!”

At this time, there appeared before God Uzza, the guardian angel of the Egyptians, and said:

“Lord of the Universe! Thou art called just and upright, and before Thee there is no wrong, no forgetting, no respecting of persons. Why, then, dost Thou wish to make my children perish in the sea? Did my children slay or drown even one of Thy children? If it be because of the hard labor that my children imposed upon Israel, then consider that they have received their wages in that

they took their silver and golden vessels from them."

Then did God assemble all the members of his celestial court and He addressed them thus:

"Do judge between Me and Uzza. In days of yore, I have caused a famine to descend upon the land of Egypt, but I also appointed My son Joseph to be ruler over the people of Egypt, and he led them by his wisdom and saved them from the famine. He became their king and the Egyptians his servants. Later, Joseph was joined by his brothers, the children of Israel, who went down into the land of Egypt because of the great famine. But the children of Mizraim made My children to serve them with all sorts of hard labor. Israel groaned on account of the bitter service, the cry of distress came to Me, and I sent Moses and Aaron, My faithful messengers to Pharaoh. When they came before the Egyptian king and delivered My message to him, Pharaoh said: 'Who is God that I should hearken unto His voice, to let Israel go?' Because he refused to let Israel go, I sent ten plagues upon him and he was compelled to let My children go. Yet in spite of all he did not leave off from his wicked ways, and he tried to bring them back under his bondage. Does he not deserve to be punished by drowning?"

The celestial gathering called out immediately:

"Thou art right in all Thy ways, O God! And

Pharaoh and his people well deserve their fate."

Uzza heard their unanimous verdict and said:

"O Lord of all worlds!—I realize that my children have dealt wickedly with the children of Israel. But do Thou, O God, deal with them with mercy, let Thy attribute of mercy then prevail."

The Lord had almost yielded to Uzza's entreaties, when Michael gave a sign to Gabriel that made him fly swiftly to Egypt and fetch thence a brick for which a Hebrew child was used as mortar. Holding this immured child, Gabriel stepped into the presence of God and said:

"O Lord of the world, wilt Thou have compassion with a nation that has so slaughtered Thy children?"

Whereupon God turned Himself away from the attribute of mercy and seating Himself upon the Throne of Justice, He resolved to drown the Egyptians. . . .

At dawn, when singing time was reached and the angels gathered to sing praises to God, He said to them:

"Do not sing today before Me and you will sing tomorrow: My creatures are drowning—how can I hear songs now? . . ."

4. *Bread from Heaven*

In the same degree that Israel showed lack of faith in God when the Egyptians overtook them,

they also showed when their food was gone. For, the bread which the Israelites had taken along out of Egypt lasted them for thirty-one days, and when it was consumed, the people began to complain against their leader, Moses. It was not as much the immediate want that oppressed them, as the despair of a food supply for the future. For, seeing the vast, extensive, utterly barren wilderness before them, their courage gave way, and they said:

"We were taken out from Egypt, expecting freedom, and now we are not even free from the cares and worries of daily maintenance. Our leader promised us to be the happiest of men, but we are the most unfortunate, indeed. Is this the land flowing with milk and honey Moses had promised us?—Would to God we died in Egypt—where we had bread aplenty and our flesh-pots were full!"

Then said God to Moses:

"Behold I will cause to rain bread from heaven for the people, so that they go out and gather a day's portion every morning. That I may test them whether they will walk in My law or not."

(There were good reasons for not exceeding a day's portion in the downpour of the heavenly food. First, that they might be spared the need of carrying it on their wanderings. Second, that they might, daily, receive it fresh. Third, that they

might day by day be depending upon God's aid, so as to exercise their faith in Him.)

While the people were still in their beds, God rained down the food upon them. For this food had been created by the Almighty on the second day of creation, and ground by the angels to descend on earth later for the Israelites who would wander in the wilderness. This bread showed its celestial origin in the miraculous flavor it possessed. There was no need of cooking or baking it, nor did it require any other preparation, for it contained whatever flavor one desired. One had only to desire a certain flavor, and no sooner had he thought of it when the desired taste was present. Furthermore, to babies it had the taste of milk, to the youth—like bread, to the old men the food tasted like honey.

As miraculous as the taste of this food, was its descent: a north wind would first come and sweep cleanly the ground of the wilderness; then a rain would descend to wash it thoroughly; then dew would descend upon it, which was congealed by the wind into a solid substance, two cubits high, serving as tables for the heavenly food.

(As the Israelites woke up the first morning when this food descended upon the earth, they wonderingly said one to the other "Man hu?" meaning "What is it?" so the name of this food became *Man* or Manna.)

The gathering of this manna caused little trouble, and those among the people who were even too lazy to do this work, went out while the manna fell, so that this celestial food fell straight into their hands. This manna lasted on the congealed tables until the fourth hour of the day, when it melted. But even the melted food was not wasted, for out of it, formed the rivers, which streamed through many lands, but any one except the Israelites who drank of them had a bitter taste in his mouth. Indirectly, however, the nations of the earth could partake of the enjoyment of the manna. They used to catch the animals that drank of the melted manna, and their meat was so delicious on account of this, that the heathen used to exclaim:

"How happy is the people who is in such a case!"

The only days on which the manna did not descend were the Sabbath and the holy days, for on the day preceding, a double portion fell. These days had the further distinction, that the manna sparkled more than usual, tasted far better, and had a wonderful fragrance emanating from it.

In order that the future generations might see the food God gave their ancestors in the wilderness, God asked Moses to lay an earthen vessel full of manna before the Holy Ark.

5. The Amalekites in War Against the Israelites

And again did Israel lose faith in God.

It happened at Rephidim where there was no water to drink, when the Israelites began to shout: "Give us water to drink!"

But Moses said:

"Wherefore do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?—He who sends you your daily bread from heaven, will give you water, too."

But the people were so enraged by their thirst that they were on the point of stoning their leaders, and Moses turned to God:

"What shall I do to this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

Thereupon God said to Moses:

"Pass on before the people and take with you of the elders of Israel. Your rod, Moses, with which you smote the river, take in your hand. See, I will stand before you upon the rock . . . smite the rock and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink!"

It was so.

And as punishment for their lack in faith God sent upon the children of Israel an enemy, Amalek. This can be compared to the following story:

Once there was a father who carried his child upon his shoulders. Whenever they passed by a store the child would say to his father: "Father

buy this for me" or, "Father, get me that." And the father fulfilled all his son's wishes. But when another man passed them, the child jocularly said to the stranger "Have you seen my father?" Very indignantly the father said to his son: "You are very foolish and an ingrate, too. I carried you upon my shoulders all this way, gave you whatever you desired, and now you say to the passerby: 'Have you seen my father?'" And when the father threw off the child from his shoulders the first thing that happened was—a dog came and bit the boy.

Thus Israel. God took them out of Egypt, enveloped them in seven Clouds of Glory; they wished for bread and He gave them manna; they wished for flesh and he sent them quails, and after all their wishes had been granted they dared to say: "Is the Lord among us or not?" And God decreed: "You doubt My power and My presence, as sure as you live, shall you discover it. The dog will come and bite you."

Then came Amalek and waged war against Israel at Rephidim.

This Amalek was the son of Eliphaz, the first-born of Esau, and though the descendants of Jacob had been weaker in earlier times, Amalek had left them alone. For he had one good reason: God had revealed to Abraham that his descendants would have to be enslaved, and this was put upon Isaac, and upon Jacob and his descendants after

him; but had Esau destroyed Jacob—the fulfilment would have to come through his descendants. Therefore did the children of Edom keep themselves from attacking the children of Israel as long as they were bondmen in Egypt, but no sooner had the bondage predicted been fulfilled, than Amalek set out to accomplish the war of annihilation against Israel.

At the departure of Israel from Egypt, Amalek set out against them and met them by the Red Sea. But there he could do them no evil, for Moses uttered against him the *Ineffable Name*, and Amalek had to retreat. But now God willed it that Amalek should punish the Israelites, so the Amalekites marched the four hundred miles that separated them from the encampment of the Israelites and declared war against them.

Moses said to his servant Joshua, son of Nun: "Choose us out men, and go out fight with Amalek."

When the people heard the manner in which Moses addressed Joshua, his servant, as his equal they were astonished, but learned to follow in the way of their leader who, though so great, was so modest.

Joshua did as Moses commanded him and he and the men he chose, set out against the Amalekites. But although to attack them one needed to know not only the skill of warfare but also the art

of magic, yet Joshua and his men proved an equal match. However, the battle was fierce and Israel fared badly. Then did Moses sit down on a stone and he lifted up his hands to God in prayer. His hands spread upward served the fighting Israelites as a signal to go on fighting for God would send them victory. But Moses' hands were heavy, so Aaron, his brother, and Hur from the tribe of Judah, supported his hands, one on each side. Moses refused to sit upon a soft cushion and preferring the hard stone he said: "So long as Israel is in distress, I shall share it with them."

And God helped Israel out of the hands of Amalek and He sent them victory, and they vanquished the Amalekites. The Amalekites thereafter remained the everlasting enemy of the Israelites. And God said to Moses:

"Write this for a memorial in the book: 'I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heaven.' "

CHAPTER XXVII

WANDERING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

1. *At the Foot of Mount Sinai*

BEFORE God gave Israel the Torah, He approached every tribe and nation and offered it to them, that hereafter they might have no excuse to say: "If God would have wished to give us His commandments we would have accepted them, too." Accordingly God went to the children of Esau and said to them:

"Will you accept My Torah?"

They answered Him saying:

"What is written therein?"

"You shall not kill," came the reply.

"No, we cannot accept Thy Torah. We live by our sword—as blessed by our father Isaac—and we do not want to accept your Law."

Then God went to the children of Ishmael and said to them:

"Do you want to accept the Torah?"

They said to Him:

"What is written therein?"

To which He made the reply:

"Therein is written 'You shall not steal.'"

"Impossible," retorted the Ishmaelites, "we cannot receive the Torah."

Whereupon God turned to the Canaanites:

"Will you receive My Torah?"

"Tell us first what is written therein," replied Canaan.

"Have a just measure, a perfect scale. . . ."

"Far be it from us to accept a law like this. We are merchants!" answered the Canaanites.

And in a similar manner God approached all peoples. Finally He came to Israel:

"Will you accept the Torah?"

And Israel's prompt reply came:

"We will do and hear! We accept Thy Law, O God!"

While the nations and the peoples were refusing to accept the Torah, the mountains were fighting among themselves for the honor of being chosen as the spot of revelation. One said: "Upon me shall the Shekhinah of God rest and the glory shall be mine!" Whereupon the other mountain said: "Upon me shall the Shekhinah of God rest and mine shall this glory be." But a voice from heaven said: "The Shekhinah shall not rest upon these high mountains that are so proud, for it is

not God's will that the Shekhinah should rest upon high mountains that quarrel among themselves. He prefers the humble, low mountains and Sinai among these, because it is the smallest and most insignificant of them all. Upon it will the glory of God dwell!"

And just as Sinai was chosen by God for His revelation because of its humbleness, so was Moses chosen because of his great humility. For when God revealed to Moses his mission to Pharaoh, he said: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?"

On the second day of the third month (Sivan), Moses received word from God to betake himself to Mount Sinai. When Moses had been carried to God in a cloud, God said to him:

"Go and acquaint the women of Israel with the principles of the Torah, and try with kindly words to persuade them to accept My Law." (For the women would be those who would have to train up their children in the precepts of the Torah.)

And these were the words Moses was to address the men and the women of Israel:

"Thus spoke the Lord:

"You yourselves have seen what I did for you in Egypt. For, although they were idolaters, killers of men, and immoral, I have not punished them for these sins only because of the wrong they have done to you. I have borne you on the wings

of eagles and have brought you to Me. Since I have performed so many miracles for you before you received the Torah, how many more miracles will I perform for you when you will have received the Torah and observed the laws thereof. The beginning of things is the hardest, but as soon as you will accustom yourselves to obedience it will be easy for you. If you will observe My Sabbath, the covenant of Abraham, My servant and desist from idolatry, then will you be My people, a people chosen by Me to be sacred and a kingdom of priests—My treasure shall you be.”

God instructed Moses to transmit to the people His words without adding or diminishing one word, in the precise order and in the same tongue—Hebrew.

Moses went down from the mountain and first addressed the words of God to the elders—whom he never failed to honor. Then to all the rest of the people. Joyfully every Israelite declared himself willing to accept the Law. Whereupon Moses returned to God to inform him of the decision of the people. And God hereupon said to Moses:

“See, I come to you in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak and may always have confidence in you. Now go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow and let them wash their garments and be ready on the third day, for on that day I will come down on

Mount Sinai within sight of all the people."

The people did accordingly. They consecrated themselves and made ready for the third day—the sixth of the month. And although the people had now clearly expressed their desire to accept the Law, still God hesitated to give it to them, saying:

"Shall I without further ado give you the Torah?"

And the Israelites replied:

"Our fathers, O Lord of the world, are bondsmen for us!"

But God refused these bondsmen and He said:

"Your fathers are My debtors and are therefore not good bondsmen. Abraham proved himself lacking in faith when he said to Me: 'Whereby shall I know it?'¹ Isaac showed his love for Esau whom I hated; Jacob, when he was in trouble exclaimed: 'My way is hidden from God!'—Bring Me good bondsmen and I will give you the Torah."

Then said the Israelites:

"We will give thee our children as bondsmen."

"These I accept as bondsmen," said the Eternal, "on their surety I will give you My Torah."

And the people said:

"We shall teach diligently to our children and to our children's children, the words of this

¹ See: Gen. xv 8.

Torah so that it shall be kept with them forever and ever."

A heavy cloud rested upon Mount Sinai from the first day of the third month, and no one except Moses was allowed to ascend the mountain, or dared even to stand near by, lest God smite those who pushed themselves forward with hail or fiery arrows. The day of the revelation announced itself as a great day even in the morning for various rumblings sounded from Mount Sinai. Flashes of lightning, accompanied by an ever-increasing peal of horns, moved the people with mighty fear and trembling. God bent the heavens, moved the earth and shook the foundations of the world, so that the depths trembled and the heavens grew frightened. The kings of the earth trembled in their palaces, and they all came to the magician, Balaam, and said to him:

"What is this noise? Does God again intend to bring a flood onto the world?"

But Balaam said to them:

"Nay, God has sworn never to bring down a flood again onto the world."

However, the kings insisted:

"Yea, God promised not to send a flood of water upon the world, but perhaps He now means to destroy the world by a flood of fire?"

To which Balaam made the following reply:

"Hear, O you kings of the earth: the commotion throughout nature is caused because the Holy One, blessed be He, is about to give His Treasure, the Torah to His people."

Upon hearing these words, the kings, quieted in spirit, went home.

When God bestowed the Torah to Israel, no bird chirped, no ox lowed, the Ophanim did not fly, the Seraphim did not proclaim their "Holy, Holy, Holy," the sea did not roar, no creature uttered a sound—all listened in awesome silence when the Voice sounded *Anokhi* ("I am!").

And as the first word had come out of the mouth of God, thunder roared and lightning proceeded from His mouth, a torch was at His right and a torch at His left, and His voice flew through the air saying:

"My people, My people, House of Israel! I am the Eternal, your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt."

When Israel heard the awesome voice, they flew back in their horror twelve miles, until their souls fled from them. Upon this the Torah turned to God, saying:

"King of the Universe! Hast Thou given me to the living, or to the dead?"

"To the living"—came the Divine reply.

And the Torah said:

"O God, but they are all dead!"

"I will restore them to life," said the Eternal. And thereupon He let fall upon them the Dew of Resurrection, and they returned to life.

But the trembling of heaven and earth that set in upon the reception of God's voice alarmed Israel so greatly that they could not stand on their feet. God thereupon sent two angels to every one of them, one to lay his hand upon the heart of each, that his soul might not depart, and one to raise the head of each that he might behold the splendor of his Creator.

The words of God that He spoke to His people were not only heard by them alone but by all inhabitants of the earth. The Divine Voice divided itself into seven voices and the seven voices changed themselves into seventy tongues of men, so that all might understand the voice of God.

After Israel had heard the Ten Words, they supposed that God would, on this occasion, reveal to them all the rest of the Torah. But the marvelous vision on Mount Sinai when they *heard the visible and saw the audible* had so exhausted them, that they would surely have perished, had they heard another word from God. They, therefore went to Moses, and begged him to be the intermediary between them and God. God found their wish right, so that He not only employed Moses as His

intermediary, but also determined that in the future, He would send prophets to Israel as messengers of His words.

Accordingly, the people withdrew twelve miles from Mount Sinai, while Moses stepped quite close before the Lord, disappearing from the sight of the people.

2. *Moses in Heaven*

The day upon which God revealed Himself on Mount Sinai was twice as long as an ordinary day. The sun did not set on that day. When his miraculous day was nigh gone, Moses ascended the holy mountain, where he had spent a week to rid himself of all mortal impurity, so that he might betake himself to God into heaven. And, at the end of his preparations, God called him to come to Him.

As Moses was approaching the Throne of Glory, a cloud appeared and lay down before him obstructing his way. Moses did not know what to do, should he ride upon it or should he merely hold on to it. While thus deliberating with himself, the cloud suddenly divided into two parts, swallowing and enveloping Moses. The cloud carried Moses on and on, while he walked upon it as one walks upon the ground. Then he met Kemuel, the head gate-keeper, who is in charge of

twelve thousand angels, who are posted at the portals. He spoke to Moses, saying:

"What do you do here, son of Amram, on this spot which belongs to the angels of fire?"

Moses replied:

"Celestial being, I came thither not on my own accord, but by the permission of God who called me to receive the Torah for the people of Israel."

As Kemual did not want to let him pass, Moses called by the Name of God, and Kemuel became frightened and fled. But as Moses continued to ride in the cloud, he was stopped by Hadarniel. Now, Hadarniel was sixty myriads of miles taller than his followers, and at every word that passed out of his mouth issued twelve thousand fiery lightning flashes. When this gigantic angel met Moses, he roared at him:

"What do you want here, son of Amram, here on the spot of the most Holy and High?"

When Moses heard his voice he was affrighted, his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth, his eyes shed tears and he had no strength to answer, and soon he would have fallen from the cloud. But God took pity on Moses and said to Hadarniel:

"You angels have been quarrelsome since the day I had created you. In the beginning, when I wanted to create Adam you raised a complaint before me, saying: 'What is man that Thou art mind-

ful of him?' Now again you begin to quarrel with the faithful one of My house, whom I have bidden to come up here to receive the Torah and carry it down to My chosen children the Israelites."

As Hadarniel heard these words of God he said:

"O Lord of the world! It is certainly known to Thee that I was not aware that he came here with Thy permission. Now that I know it I will be his messenger, and go before him as a servant before his master."

Hadarniel, hereupon, in a humble attitude ran before Moses to show him the way, until they reached the fire of Sandalphon, when he said to Moses:

"Go, turn about for I may not stay in this spot lest the fire of Sandalphon scorch me. . . ."

Now that Moses beheld Sandalphon, he became terrified, and in his alarm came near falling out of the cloud. And again did Moses, with tears in his eyes, implore God to have mercy upon him. God accepted Moses' prayer, for He Himself, in His abundant love for His people, Israel, descended from the Throne of His Glory and stood before Moses until he had passed the flaming river of Sandalphon.

When Moses passed Sandalphon's fire, he reached the Throne of Glory. But when Moses beheld the Angels of Terror that surround the

Throne, he feared them greatly, for these Angels wished to burn Moses with their fiery breath, but God spread over Moses His radiance of splendor to protect him, while saying to him:

“Hold on tight to the Throne of My Glory and answer these angels.”

(For as soon as the angels became aware of Moses in their midst they said to God:

“What does he, a mortal, do here?”

And God’s answer to them had been:

“To receive My Torah!”

While they, furthermore, said:

“Give us, celestial beings, Thy Torah, and do not give it to Man.”)

Moses, thereupon said to the angels:

“It is written in the Torah: ‘I am the Eternal your God, who have led you out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage!’ Were you, O angels, enslaved in Egypt and then delivered? It is further said therein: ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.’ Are there, perchance, idolaters among you?—It is also said therein: ‘Remember the day of Sabbath to keep it holy!’ Is there any work among you that you must rest on the seventh day? It is written therein: ‘You shall not kill!’ Are you, immortals, in need of such a prohibition? There is also a prohibition. ‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s house’—are there, perhaps, houses, fields or vineyards among you,

that you are in need of such a prohibition?"

The angels, upon hearing this logical argument, had nothing to answer, but giving up their opposition to the delivering of the Torah into the hands of Israel, exclaimed:

"Lord, our God, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Thou who hast set Thy Glory upon the heavens, give now Thy Treasure, which has been hidden with Thee these nine hundred and seventy-four years to the people Thou hast chosen. . . . How excellent be Thy Name now upon earth!"

And it came to pass after this, that Moses saw the Torah and behold it was written with black fire upon skins of white fire. And God was sitting upon His Throne high and exalted, adding the crown-like ornamentations on the top of the letters. Moses looked on without saying a word. And God said to him:

"Moses, do not the people at your home know the greeting of peace?"

And Moses replied:

"Does it behoove a servant to address his master first?"

"But," replied the Eternal, "you could have at least wished me success in my labor!"

To which Moses said:

"May the power of my Lord be great according as Thou hast spoken."

Then Moses inquired as to the significance of the crownlets upon the letters, and God said to him:

"In the days to come there shall live a man, Akiba, son of Joseph, by name, who will base his interpretation of the Torah on every dot and crownlet of these letters."

Moses said to God:

"If I find favor in Thy sight, O God, show me that great man."

God said:

"I do as you bid Me. Now, turn backward."

Moses did accordingly. He, then, beheld a house in which were sitting very many rows of disciples before a master whose face shone like the face of an angel of God. The disciples were discussing a point of the Law, but Moses was unable to follow the discussion, which grieved him greatly. But just then he heard the disciples questioning their teacher in regard to a certain subject, and he made the following answer:

"This is a Halakhah² of Moses on Mount Sinai."

Moses was very happy, and returning to God he said:

² Halakhah: traditional law, custom or precedent.

"O Lord! Thou hast a man like Akiba and yet, dost give the Torah to Israel through me!"

But God said:

"Be silent, O Moses, so has it been decreed by Me."

"If it please Thee, O Lord," Moses continued, "allow me to see the reward Thou wilt mete out to that man, since Thou hast permitted me to see his great learning."

"Go, return, and see!" said God.

Moses looked backward and saw the great man surrounded by a multitude of wicked people who were flaying his skin with iron combs. . . . And Moses exclaimed:

"Is this the Torah's reward?"

"Peace!" said God. "Thus it is decreed!"

And God continued:

"Because you have said: 'Akiba is greater and wiser than I, give the Torah through him,' I shall increase your wisdom. And as he spoke, God opened the fifty "gates of wisdom" and meted out to Moses forty-nine, leaving only one for the rest of mankind.

Accordingly, Moses became the wisest of all men, and God opened up his eyes and he saw all things that would come to pass until the end of days. Moses saw all the leaders of his people, the good ones as well as the wicked ones. There was not a thing that Moses did not see.

And as Moses beheld the wickedness and cruelty committed by those in power against the weak, poor and helpless, he became very sad and sorrowfully he said to God:

"Judge of the whole world! Wherefore dost Thou close Thy eyes not to see the wicked deeds of the people? Thou seest evil and dost not put a stop to it. Do, O Lord, give me understanding. Why does the way of the wicked prosper?"

And God answered Moses, saying:

"I hearkened to your prayer and I will show you the ways of My judgment. But you shall be shown only a part of it, for no mortal can be shown it all. Open your eyes, Moses, and see!"

And Moses lifted up his eyes and saw a little bright brook streaming at the bottom of a hill. Soon a warrior passed by the brook riding on his horse. The rider alighted from his horse, gave his horse to drink, and quenched his own thirst with the pure, cold water of the brook. But, as he stooped to drink of the water, a purse full of money fell out of his pocket, unnoticed by him. Then he mounted his horse and rode on.

Some minutes passed and then a young shepherd boy came to that place to water his flock. When he finished his task and stooped to drink himself, he noticed the purse of money that the soldier had lost. He picked it up, put it in his

pocket, saying: "God has been good to me to-day. I shall return the flock to my cruel master, and will leave him and will go back to my poor mother, who will buy a house and a field for this money that I have found."

As soon as the boy left that spot happily, a poor old man came there. Being weary and tired by the heat of the day and the long walk, he sat down by the brook, opened his sack, took out a piece of dry bread which he dipped in the water, ate and drank, and lay down to rest. Sleep soon overtook the old wayfarer. But no sooner had the old man dozed off, when the soldier, who lost the purse, becoming aware of his loss, ran back to the brook to look for it, for he was certain that the purse fell out of his pocket when he bent down to drink. Finding the old man asleep near the brook the soldier roughly woke him up, shouting:

"Give me back my purse of money that you have found here!"

The old man getting up, rubbed his eyes, and said bewilderedly:

"What is the matter with you, what are you shouting at me for?"

"Restore to me the purse that you have picked up here, for there was no one here but you," insisted the soldier.

"But I saw no purse here, and found no money, and don't know what you are talking about," said the weary old man.

But the soldier grew very angry at the old man and slew him. Then, when he searched through all his pockets and his clothes and not having found it, he left the place in great wrath.

Looking with horror and amazement at this injustice, Moses said to God:

"I beseech Thee, O God, show me Thy ways. Why has this man, who was quite innocent, been slain, and why has the shepherd boy become rich and happy in but a moment?"

And God said to Moses, again:

"Lift up your eyes and see the steps of this ladder which is standing before you. I shall make you climb up on that step where no man has yet gone up. Thereon your eyes will be opened and you will see the justice of My ways."

Moses, thereupon, climbed the ladder and stood upon the highest rung, as God had bidden him.

"What do you see, Moses?" said God.

Moses answered and said:

"I see a lame peasant leaning on his boy while limping slowly. An elderly man is approaching the pair. Then the man falls upon the peasant, robs him of his money and flees away. A soldier is standing nearby and does not interfere. . . ."

"You have seen aright," said God to Moses,

“and now lend me your ear and hearken to what I tell you, that you might understand the ways of my judgment:

“The old man that was murdered by the brook, was the same old man who had slain the lamed peasant, robbing him of his money. The soldier that killed him was the same one who stood by the murder without interfering. The same soldier found the money that was robbed, for the robber lost it as he hurried on with his loot. Now since the money was not his, he lost it when he stooped to drink from the water of the brook. And the lad that found the purse is the true owner of the money as he is the peasant’s son, his only heir. Are not my judgments right? He who killed an innocent person, was killed himself; the same soldier who did not interfere to stop bloodshed then, had to shed blood now; and the stolen money was restored to its lawful owner—the heir of the crippled peasant.”

Upon hearing this, Moses exclaimed:

“A God of Faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is He!”

In this way, God granted the request of Moses “to show him His ways.” He also let him look into the future, and He let him see every generation and its prophets, every generation and its leaders,

every generation and its pious men, every generation and its sages. However, God did not grant him the wish to see His glory. For He said to Moses:

"I will make all my angels pass before you in review, but My face you cannot see, for man shall not see Me and live. And it shall be, that when My glory passes by you that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. And, when I will take away My hand, you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

3. *The Golden Calf*

When Moses departed from his people, he said to them:

"Wait for me forty days. At the end of forty days, I shall come down to you from Mount Sinai with the Torah in my hands!"

Accordingly, at noon on the fortieth day Satan came, and cunningly said to the Israelites:

"Where is your leader, Moses, son of Amram?"

"He is up in heaven, and we await his coming," replied the people.

But Satan said:

"Moses will never come down to you!" And while saying it he conjured up for the people a vision: Moses lying stretched on a black-bier, floating on a heavy cloud midway between heaven and earth. Now Satan pointing at that vision,

cried: . . . "This man, Moses, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt is dead."

Thereupon, the mixed multitude (forty thousand in number) who had come up with the Israelites from Egypt, headed by the arch-magicians Jannes and Jambres, appeared before Aaron saying:

"Come, make us a god who shall go before us! As for this Moses who brought us up out of the land of Egypt—there is no use of waiting. He is dead, dead!"

Now Hur, son of Miriam, whom Moses appointed as joint leader with Aaron during his absence, said to these people with great indignation:

"What, are we like the Egyptians who are wont of carrying their gods with them wherever they go? Moses is not dead. Believe not in magic visions. Soon will Moses come as he has promised. Do not be fickle-minded! Have you already forgotten the great wonders God the Invisible has shown us in Egypt and in this great desert? Have you already forsaken our God who gives us daily our manna?"

But the rabble did not let him continue his speech and slew him. Then, they turned to Aaron in great wrath and cried:

"You make us a god, or else we will dispose of you, too!"

Aaron did not care for his own life, but he thought: "If Israel were to commit so dreadful a sin as to slay their priest and prophet, God would never forgive them. I shall rather do what they ask of me. But Moses will arrive in the meantime." Hereupon Aaron said to the people:

"Bring me the golden rings of your wives, your sons and your daughters."

Aaron thought that they would not wish to part with their ornaments, as it was so indeed, for the women did not want to give their ornaments for making an idol. But the people, nevertheless, immediately brought their own ornaments of gold to Aaron. As Aaron saw the speed with which this thing was done, he was very grieved, for he perceived how quickly the Israelites had been led astray by the mixed multitude. Now Aaron, in order to put them off from idolatry took from their hands the gold ornaments, wrapped them in a cloth and threw them in the fire. But just then, came the two arch-magicians Jannes and Jambres and they conjured up a golden calf to jump out of the fire.

When the mixed multitude of strangers that came out of Egypt with the Israelites perceived this living golden calf, they shouted gleefully:

"This is your God, O, Israel!"

And all the people began to dance around the idol worshiping it with songs and prayers. They

also went to the seventy elders to demand their recognition of the calf-service, but these refused to abandon God, but remained loyal to Him.

The people then wanted to erect an altar to their newly-formed idol, but Aaron tried to prevent this by saying:

"It will be more reverential to your god if I, the priest, will alone build his altar." He did this in order to gain time. And he moreover declared:

"Tomorrow there shall be a feast to your god!"

But this expectation was frustrated too, for on the morning of the following day, when Aaron had completed the altar, Moses had not yet arrived, and the people began to offer their sacrifices to the Golden Calf.

When the people turned aside from their God; He said to Moses who was still in heaven:

"Go down, for *your* people which you have brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves."

While God spoke thus to Moses, he felt that that great light which shone from his face, owing to the splendor of the Torah which God bestowed upon him decreased a thousand times. And Moses feared greatly for he saw by the angry countenances of the angels that they meant to kill him. He had particularly feared much five angels of Destruction: Ketzeph, Aph, Hemah, Mashhit and Haron,

whom God had sent to annihilate Israel. And Moses prayed to God:

"O God! It is not long since Thou hast sent me to deliver Israel, and then Thou hast said to me: 'Go and deliver *my* people from Egypt.' Now Thou callest them *my* people. No, whether pious or sinful, Eternal God, Israel is *Thy* people."

Moses continued:

"What dost Thou intend to do with them?"

And God replied:

"I will consume them, and I will make of you a great people."

Moses said to God:

"I shall not move from this place until Thou hast promised me to forgive the iniquity of this people. Now, O Lord, tell me what they have done?"

"They have made unto themselves a molten calf," replied the Eternal.

Then Moses began to implore God's mercy for His people:

"Consider, O God the readiness of Israel, to receive Thy Torah whereas all the rest of the nations rejected it. Consider also that when I came to Egypt to speak in Thy Name they believed me and bowed down their heads in worship of Thee. Consider that on Mount Sinai, the children of Israel acknowledged Thee as God."

But as these arguments availed nothing, Moses continued:

"When Abraham implored Thee on behalf of Sodom whom Thou hadst decided to destroy, Thou hadst said: 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous, I will spare the city for their sake. Wilt Thou annihilate the Israelites notwithstanding the many of them who, I am certain, have not worshiped that idol?'"

But God said:

"Moses, when Israel was still in Egypt I commissioned you to lead them out of that land, but not to take along with them the strangers who came to join them. But you in your clemency and humility did persuade Me to accept the "mixed multitude." Now it is they, *your* people, who have seduced Israel to idolatry. Now, both Israel and they, must be destroyed."

To this Moses made the following reply:

"O God, Israel has indeed sinned against Thee in creating a rival for Thee. The calf they made, I reckon, shall interfere with Thy ruling the world. He will order the stars and the moon to appear when Thou wilt order the sun to rise. . . . When thou wilt send the dew to moisten the earth, he will send winds, or Thou wilt cause rain to come down and he will cause the plants to grow. . . ."

"Moses, are you, too, misled by the calf? Do you

not know that the idol is of no avail?" said God.

"Indeed I do," said Moses. "It is a calf, one that eats grass and is ready to be slaughtered. And if so, why art Thou, O God, angry with *Thy* people for worshipping that which is nothing? Besides, Thou hast said *Thyself* that it was chiefly *my* people, the mixed multitude, that was to blame for this sin, why then art Thou angry with Thy people? O Lord of the world! Wherefore should the Egyptians say: 'By the evil star, Ra'ah, did He bring them forth to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth.' Turn, O God, from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou didst swear by Thine Ownself and saidst unto them: 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto them, and they shall inherit it.'"

God hearkened unto Moses' prayer and accepted it. He did, thereupon, repent of the evil He had intended to bring upon His people, and He said to Moses:

"Moses, My servant! I repent of the evil that I had determined to bring upon My people."

Now, as Moses was about to descend from heaven at the end of forty days, the Angels of God saw him, and behold! the radiance of his face was

lessened—so they all surrounded him to burn him up. When Moses saw all these Angels of Destruction, of Terror and of Trembling, he was greatly afraid, and through his great fear, he forgot all that God had taught him on Mount Sinai. Then did God send to Moses the angel, Yephemiah, the prince of Torah, who handed over to Moses all the Torah, well arranged. When the Angels saw this they all sought Moses' friendship. They all revealed to him many hidden mysteries of the Torah, as well as the application of God's Holy Names. Even the Angel of Death revealed to Moses the secret remedy of staying death.

Thus Moses descended from heaven with the two tables of stone, tables that were the work of God Himself and written on both their sides.

4. The Tables Broken: New Tables

As soon as Moses descended from the holy mount, he found there his true servant Joshua, son of Nun who had not gone away from the slope of the mountain throughout all the forty days and forty nights that Moses stayed in heaven.

Together they went now to the encampment. On approaching it, they heard the cries of the people and Joshua remarked to Moses:

"There is a noise of war in the camp, Master!"

But disdainfully Moses replied:

"Joshua, aren't you able to distinguish cries?"

This is not a cry of Israel conquering their enemies, nor is it a cry of a defeated foe, it is a cry of adoration of an idol, that they have made unto themselves. . . .”

When Moses had come close enough to the camp to see what was going on there, he thought: “How can I give these tables of commandment to them now, enjoining them not to worship idols while they are in the midst of the same sin.” But immediately Moses noticed that the letters were vanishing from the tables one by one, and with the disappearance of the celestial letters the tables became heavier and heavier until Moses could not hold the weighty stones. (For, while the writing of God was upon them they carried the stone-tables themselves, and Moses did not feel their burden, but as the letters flew away, this changed). Hence Moses threw away the tables which immediately broke into pieces.

Moses took the Golden Calf which they had made, burned it with fire, ground it to a fine powder, and scattered it upon the water, and then made the children of Israel drink of it. And it was so: he who worshiped the idol and drank of the water, was poisoned and died, but he who did not worship the idol, the water had no effect on him.

Those who were executed by God’s judgments were three thousand people. And Moses prayed

to God to forgive all the people. He was even ready to sacrifice himself for his people, for he said to God:

“If you will not entirely forgive the people, blot me out of Thy book.”

These bold words of Moses had their effect, God forgave His people and ordered Moses to hew out again two tables of stone for the Ten Words.

God showed Moses a diamond quarry out of which he hewed the two tables. The chips that fell therefrom God ordered Moses to take for himself. These chips made Moses a rich man. For until now Moses was poor, for while all the people were appropriating for themselves the Egyptian wealth at the time of the Exodus, Moses had busied himself in finding Joseph's coffin. So now, Moses possessed all the qualifications of a prophet—wealth, strength, humility and wisdom.

Again Moses stayed in heaven forty days and forty nights, devoting himself to the study and the writing of the Torah. In all that time, Moses ate no bread and drank no water. He received nourishment from the radiance of the Shekhinah, which also sustains the Holy Hayyoth that bear the Throne. Moses spent the day in learning and the night in repeating what he had learned.

God ordered Moses to write down the words of the Torah. So God dictated to Moses while he was writing, dipping his quill in black fire. . . .

When Moses completed his writing, he wiped his pen on the hair of his head nearer to the forehead. This drop of celestial ink cleaved to his forehead and caused his face to radiate with rays of light. And thus when Moses returned from the mountain the second time, the people were greatly amazed to see his face shining. They also feared him. But Moses quieted them and began to impart to the people the Torah which he had received from God.

When Moses had been in heaven the second time he said to God:

“Show me Thy Glory.”

And God said to Moses:

“Lift up your eyes and see!”

And while saying it, gates of great light opened. Moses asked:

“Whose gates are these?”

“These are for those who learn My Torah,” replied God.

These gates closed and the Gates of Salvation and Consolation opened.

“For whom are these gates?” queried Moses.

“These are the gates for those who rely on Me,” answered God.

When these gates closed there opened new gates whence came forth such a light the like of which one never saw before. Moses beheld and saw that

these gates were full of crowns, and each crown bore the inscription of *Shem Tov* (good name).

"To whom do these belong?" inquired Moses.

"They belong to those charitable people who give of theirs to the poor and needy, who help the fatherless and protect the weak."

When these gates closed, there opened the gates upon which were inscribed "*Hesed Hinnam*" (free loving-kindness).

And as Moses inquired whose those gates were, God replied:

"These are My gates. For, with what can man repay Me for all goodness and kindness I bestow upon him?"

5. *The Tabernacle*

The Day when God promised Moses that He had forgiven Israel their sin of the "Golden Calf" was the tenth day of Tishri—a day designated by the Eternal for forgiveness. And Moses said then to God:

"Lord of the Universe! I feel convinced that Thou hast forgiven Israel, but I wish Thou wouldst show the nations of all the earth that Thou art reconciled with Thy people." (Because all the nations were saying: "How can a nation that heard God's words on Sinai, 'You shall have no other gods before Me' transgress only forty days later, saying to a calf, 'This is your god, O Israel!'")

And then expect their God to pardon them.”)

And the Eternal, therefore, said to Moses:

“As truly as you live, Moses, My servant, I will let My Shekhinah dwell among them, so that all may know that I have forgiven Israel. My sanctuary in their midst will be a testimony of My forgiveness of their sins. This sanctuary shall therefore be called: “Tabernacle of Testimony.” Furthermore: Tell Israel that I order them to erect a tabernacle to Me not because I lack a dwelling place, for the heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool; before the world had been created, I had erected My temple in the heavens—but only as a token of My affection for you, will I leave My heavenly temple to dwell among you. Indeed, let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.”

In order to atone for the gold of which they made the calf, God told them to bring gold for the making of the tabernacle. And besides the gold He ordered them to take twelve other materials for the construction of the sanctuary: silver, brass, wool dipped in blue, purple or scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, badgers' skins, acacia-wood, oil (for light), spices (for the anointing oil and for sweet incense), onyx stones and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.

When Moses was in heaven, God showed him

the Tabernacle, as well as the models for all the holy vessels therein. But for the building of the Tabernacle God appointed the master-builder, Bezalel.

Bezalel was first of all of a noble line. His grandfather was Hur, a son of Moses' sister Miriam, and of Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, who was killed when he wanted to restrain Israel from worshiping the Golden Calf. As a reward for his martyrdom, his son, Bezalel, was to build the Tabernacle, and one of his later descendants, King Solomon, was to build the temple at Jerusalem. Bezalel was not only great because he was of a noble family, but because he himself was endowed with great wisdom and understanding. His name *Bezalel* "in the shadow of God" was very significant of the abilities of the man.

The very first thing that Bezalel constructed was the Ark of the Covenant, although Moses ordered him to erect the Tabernacle first, and then the Ark and the other furnishings of the Tabernacle. For Bezalel convinced Moses that it was the proper thing to begin with making the Ark. Bezalel said to Moses:

"What is the purpose of this Tabernacle?"

And Moses replied:

"That God may let His Shekhinah rest therein, and teach the Torah to His people, Israel."

Then said Bezalel to Moses:

"And wherein is the Torah to be kept?"

To which Moses replied:

"As soon as the Tabernacle shall have been completed, we shall make the Ark for keeping the Torah."

Whereupon Bezalel said to Moses:

"O Moses, our Master, does it behoove the dignity of our Torah to lie around without its proper place? Let us first make the Ark for the Torah, and then go on with the erection of the Tabernacle. For the Tabernacle exists only for the sake of the Torah."

Moses, convinced of the justice of this argument, allowed Bezalel to make the Ark first, and then construct the Tabernacle. (Thus they followed the example of God Himself who had created light first and then the world.)

Two Arks marched ahead of Israel all through their long wandering in the wilderness, in one the bones of the dead man, Joseph, were carried, and in the other, the Covenant of the Living God. Wayfarers seeing these two Arks borne, would ask: "How is it that you carry the Ark of the dead and the Ark of the Living side by side?" The answer given would be: "The man enshrined here fulfilled all the commandments that lie within the other Ark."

This is how the Ark was constructed: it con-

sisted of three caskets—a gold one; within this a wooden one, within which was another gold one. The first was ten spans long, the second—nine, and the third—eight. That means that within and without the Ark was overlaid with gold.

The Ark contained the two tables of the Ten Commandments, the Ineffable Name, and all the other epithets of God. On the Ark were the Cherubim with faces of boys and wings. Their number was also two, corresponding to the two tables, and to the two sacred Names of God, Adonai and Elohim.

Of the other furnishings of the Tabernacle, Moses had difficulty with the making of the candlestick. God had indeed shown Moses, while he was in heaven, the construction of the candlestick—but he had forgotten it. But when Moses implored God to show him again the candelabra, He took a candlestick of fire and plainly showed to Moses every single detail of it. But as the matter was not easy for Moses, God said to him: "Go to Bezalel and he will do it." And indeed Bezalel had no difficulty in doing it, and when Moses saw that Bezalel constructed a candelabra exactly like the one shown him by God, he exclaimed:

"You truly deserve your name—Bezalel, you do things as if you were in the shadow of God."

The materials used for the construction of the Tabernacle, as for instance, the skins and the wood, were of no common order. God had created the animal, Tahash (badger), exclusively for the need of the Tabernacle. It was of such an enormous size that out of the skin of one could be made a curtain, thirty cubits long. This species of animal disappeared as soon as they used all they needed of its skin for the Tabernacle. The cedars of the Tabernacle, too, were gotten in a peculiar way. For indeed where would Israel have obtained such precious wood in the wilderness? But this is the way they obtained the wood:

When Jacob reached Egypt, he had planted a cedar wood (having brought the plants from the Holy Land), and had enjoined his sons as follows:

“You will, in the future, be released from the Egyptian bondage, and on your way to the Promised Land, God will ask of you to build a sanctuary to Him. Plant cedar trees, then, that you may have such wood ready when God will bid you to erect that Tabernacle.” Among these cedars was also that wonderful cedar out of which was made that “middle bar in the midst of the boards that reach from end to end.”³

Together with the making of the Tabernacle

³ See Exodus: xxvi, 28.

and its vessels were also made the priestly robes for Aaron and his sons. And it was at this time that God made known Aaron's appointment to Moses. At God's bidding, Aaron was appointed high priest and his sons as priests. God ordered to make for Aaron the following eight garments: coat, breeches, mitre, girdle, breastplate, ephod, robe and golden plate, while for his sons only the first four garments were made.

The breastplate and the ephod were set with precious stones—the gifts of the noble princes of the tribes. The ephod had only two precious stones, one on each shoulder and on each of these stones were engraved the names of six tribes in the following order: Reuben, Levi, Issachar, Naphtali, Gad, Jehoseph (the name Joseph was spelled Jehoseph, a device by which the two stones had exactly the same number of letters), on the right shoulder-piece—while the names, Simeon, Judah, Zebulum, Dan, Asher, Benjamin on the left shoulder. On the breastplate were twelve precious stones (carnelian, topaz, smagrad, carbuncle, sapphire, emerald, jacinth, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx and jasper). On these were engraved the names of the three Patriarchs, twelve tribes and the words "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel."

The twelve stones in the breastplate were of great importance in the oracular sentences of the

High Priest, who, by means of these stones made the Urim and the Thumim exercise their prophetic functions. Whenever one came to inquire something of the Urim and Thumim the High Priest after asking of God for guidance, would take down his breastplate, and then, whatever letter on the plate would shine out the brightest, it would be added to the next brightest letter until an answer would be spelled. For instance, if the answer to a king's inquiry would be to go down to battle—*Lekh* (go) the letter *Lamed* from the name Levi, and the letter *Khaph* from Issachar would shine out the brightest. This oracle was called Urim and Thumim, because the answer would invariably be trustworthy spreading *light* and *truth*. Only those High Priests who were permeated with the Holy Spirit and over whom rested the Shekhinah could obtain an answer of these precious stones, otherwise the stones withheld their hidden power.

On the eleventh day of Tishri, Moses assembled the people and told them that it was God's wish to have a sanctuary among them and each man was bidden to bring to the sanctuary and offering he pleased. And when Moses made known God's command to the people, that whatsoever one wanted to bring he could do so, the zeal of the women to participate was so great that they had crowded forward with their gifts before the men had a

chance, so that in two days all that was needed for the construction of the Tabernacle was in Moses' hands. The princes of the tribes came also too late with their contributions, and at the last moment they brought the precious stones for the garments of Aaron, that they might not be entirely unrepresented in the sanctuary.

The work of the Tabernacle progressed so rapidly that it was ready in the month of Kislev, but it was not set up until three months later, in the month of Nissan.

But Moses suffered much during this time of the Tabernacle's construction. When he showed himself upon the street, the fault-finders and critics of all kinds would say one to the other:

"See how well-fed Moses looks! Look what a fat neck he has got, behold the stoutness of Amram's son! He eats and drinks from our money. . . ."

"Well, what do you think, would anyone who has charge of so much gold, silver, and precious stones, remain poor?"

Moses overheard it, was grieved, but said nothing. But when the Tabernacle had been completed, he gave them an exact account of wherever every item went. Thereafter, all Israel became convinced that Moses was as faithful and honest an administrator as he was a noble leader.

When all was completed the people were very

much disappointed that the Shekhinah did not rest upon their work, and they went to the wise men who had worked on the construction of the Tabernacle and said to them:

“Why do you sit thus idle, set up the Tabernacle, that the Shekhinah may dwell among us.”

These now attempted to set up the Tabernacle but did not succeed, for hardly did they finish putting it up when it fell down. Now, all went to Bezalel, the master-builder, and Oholiab, his assistant, saying to them:

“You, who have constructed the Tabernacle, set it up for us, perhaps it will stand.”

Now these two tried to set up the Tabernacle but without any success. Then did the people begin to complain:

“See what the son of Amram did to us, we spent our gold and silver, and went through all that trouble, because he assured us that God would descend from His celestial abode to make His dwelling with us, now, shall all this work of ours be in vain?”

The people also went to Moses and said to him:

“Moses our master, we have done all that you have told us to do, we gave all you told us to give. Look now upon this completed work and tell us if we have omitted anything. Examine our work then, and do tell us.”

Moses examined the Tabernacle and admitted, that all was done perfectly.

"But," said the people, "if it is so, why cannot the Tabernacle be set up, neither by us nor by the master-builders, Bezalel and Oholiab?"

As this grieved Moses greatly, God said to him:

"Moses, Moses! You have been sorry not to have any direct share in the construction of the Tabernacle, since the people supplied the material thereof and Bezalel and Oholiab and the other wise men worked at it. Therefore, was it ordered by Me that none but you should be able to set the Tabernacle up."

"But O Lord! I do not know how to set it up," pleaded Moses.

"Go," replied the Eternal, "begin to do it, and while you are busying yourself with its setting up, it will rise of its own accord."

And it was so. Hardly had Moses put his hand upon the Tabernacle when it stood erect. So all the people realized how great and favored Moses, their leader, had been by God.

6. *Marching On*

Seven clouds came down from heaven and enveloped them as a canopy. The Holy Ark that was carried in the midst of the camp performed all the miracles on the way. Two sparks issued from the Cherubim that spread their wings over

the Ark. These sparks killed all the serpents and scorpions that crossed the path of the Israelites, and also burned all thorns that threatened to injure the wanderers on their march through the wilderness. The smoke raising from these scorched thorns, rose straight as a column, and spread a fragrance that perfumed all the world. And the nations used to wonder and say: "Who is this that comes out from the wilderness?" And the pillar of cloud that went before the people used to make straight all the hills on their way, so that their journey was very pleasant.

This is how they were encamped, and this is the order of their march, each tribe according to his standard.

God said to Moses:

"Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch his tent by his own standard, with the ensign of his father's house, a good way off from the Tabernacle shall they pitch."

Moses was perplexed, for he thought: "Now there will arise much strife among the tribes as to where shall each encamp. If I say to the tribe of Judah, for instance, to encamp in the East, he will say, 'I want to encamp in the South' and any tribe will likewise contend the place I choose for him." But the Eternal said to Moses:

"Do not worry as to their selecting the sites to encamp. They do not need your direction. Be-

fore Jacob, their father, died, he had ordered them to carry his bier while grouped in certain directions—thus will they arrange themselves now. Just bid them to divide themselves in groups around the Tabernacle, and they will arrange themselves in that ancient order.”

And the children of Israel did accordingly. In the East whence the light comes dwelt the standard of the camp of Judah, consisting of: Judah, Issachar and Zebulum and near them were Moses, Aaron, and their families. On the South was the standard of the camp of Reuben, consisting of: Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, and near them were the children of Kohath. In the West there was the standard of the camp of Ephraim—Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, while near them were the sons of Gershon. And on the North there was the standard of the camp of Dan, in that group were numbered the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. Near them dwelt the Levites of the family of Merari.

These four standards were distinguished from one another by their different colors, and by the inscription and figures upon each of them. And these four standards were subdivided into twelve different ensigns, equalling in color the stone that was placed in the High Priest's breastplate representing that particular tribe. Reuben's flag was a

red field upon which was the symbol of mandrakes. Simeon's flag was of a green field, with the picture of the city of Shechem upon it. (In remembrance of the city their forefather conquered.) Levi—his flag was of red, black and white. Judah's flag was azure with the picture of a lion upon it. Issachar's flag was a black field bearing two figures, the sun and the moon. (From this tribe sprang the learned men who knew astronomy and the science of the calendar.) Zebulum's flag was a white field with a ship on it. (Since this tribe was destined to be devoted to navigation.) Dan's flag had the color of sapphire stone with the figure of a serpent on it. (For Jacob had said: "Dan shall be a serpent in the way.") Naphtali's flag was the color of dull red, something like wine, and on it was the figure of a hind. (In memory of their forefather, Naphtali, who had been as "a hind let loose.") Gad's flag was a mixture of white and black with a representation of a company of soldiers. Asher's flag was red like fire and had the symbol of an olive tree (as this tribe was destined to have much olive-oil in their possession.) The two sons of Joseph had similar flags, of the same deep black color with a representation on one side of Egypt (place of their birth), and on the other side, for Ephraim—the symbol of a bull, and for Manasseh a unicorn. Benjamin's flag had all the

colors of the other eleven flags, and the figure of a wolf on it (in accordance with what Jacob had said: "Benjamin is a wolf that ravens.")

And as they were encamped thus did they march. Whenever God wanted Israel to break up camp and to march on, he would send on from its place over the Holy Ark the cloud which beamed the two sacred letters *Yod* and *He*,⁴ in the direction in which Israel should march and the four clouds over the four standards would follow. As soon as the priests saw these clouds in motion, they blew the trumpets as a signal for starting. But yet all would not move until Moses would rise and say:

"Rise up, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee!" Whereupon the pillar of clouds would set in motion. And it was the same when they pitched camp. The pillar of clouds would wait for Moses. And Moses would say: "Return O Lord unto the many thousands of Israel!" Whereupon the cloud would spread over the standards and then envelop all the camp and remain thus until they would move on again.

⁴ יה (Yah).

CHAPTER XXVIII

BEFORE THE GATES OF THE PROMISED LAND

1. *The Spies*

WHEN Israel approached the boundaries of the Holy Land, they appeared before Moses, saying:

"We want to send men before us, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, and bring us report as to what sort of people the Canaanites are, how are their cities and by what way can we go up to their land."

This wish caused God's anger to arise against the Israelites, and He said:

"When you went through a land of deserts and of pits, you had no desire for spies, but now that you are about to enter a land full of good things, you wish to send men to scout the land for you!"

Of course, this request of theirs showed again the lack of faith in God on the part of the Israelites. But they pretended the following cause for demanding spies of Moses:

"So long as we are in the wilderness, the clouds act as scouts for us, for they move before us and

show us the way, but as these will not go with us in the promised land, we want men to search out the land for us."

They also urged Moses to send spies to Canaan for the following reason:

"The inhabitants of the land of Canaan fear an attack from us and have therefore hidden their treasures. For this reason we want to send spies there in time to discover for us where they are hiding their treasures."

Moses allowed himself to be influenced by their talk and he also liked the idea of sending spies, but not wishing to act on his own accord, he submitted the desire of the people to God. And God answered:

"It is not the first time that the Israelites disbelieve My promises. I know their real motive in sending spies—disbelief in Me. If you wish to send spies, do so."

Moses, hereupon, chose one man from every tribe (with the exception of Levi) and sent them to spy out the land. These twelve men were the most distinguished and most pious of their respective tribes, so that even God consented to their choice, although he did not approve of the idea. But hardly had they been appointed to their office when they made the wicked resolve to bring up an evil report of the land, and dissuade the people from moving to the Land of Canaan. But two of

these twelve men were of a different heart. They were the representatives of Judah—Caleb, the son of Jephunneh (whose very name signified “he spoke what he felt in his heart and turned aside from the advice of the rest of the spies”), and the representative of the tribe of Ephraim was pious and true to his mission. His name was Hoshea, the son of Nun (a very fitting name for him, “he was full of understanding and was not caught like a fish by the spies”). But Moses added a letter *Yod* to his name, thus changing it to Joshua, saying “May God help you from the evil counsel of the spies.”

When the spies set out on their way, Moses instructed ~~them~~ as follows:

“Do not walk on the highways, but go along on the private pathways. If you enter a city, do not slink in like thieves but go in publicly in broad daylight and if any one asks you what your business in the city is, merely say, that you came to buy some grapes and pomegranates. Look around carefully as to what manner of land it is. If you find the inhabitants dwelling in open places, know that they are mighty, since they rely on their own strength; if they live, however, in fortified cities, then they are weak people and fearing an attack of an invader they seek shelter within their walls. Also scrutinize the soil—if it be fertile or barren, whether there is wood in it or not. Be courageous,

and also bring some of the fruit of the land (as it was the time of the first ripe grapes)."

On the twenty-seventh day of Sivan (in the second year of their wandering) Moses sent out the spies from Kadesh-Barnea in the wilderness of Paran, and following his directions, they went first to the South of Canaan, the poorest part of the Holy Land. Moses did like the merchants who first showed the customers the poorer wares and next the better. He wished the spies to see the better parts of the land the farther they advanced into it. When they reached Hebron, they could judge what a blessed land had been promised them, for although Hebron was the poorest section in all Canaan, it was still much better than Zoan, the most excellent part of Egypt.

The spies' journey through the land was easy on the whole, for God had wished it so. And as soon as the spies entered a city, the plague struck it, and the inhabitants, busied with the burial of their dead, had neither the time nor the desire to bother about the strangers. This was taken by the spies to mean that the land was such a one "That eats up the inhabitants thereof." And although they met with no evil on the part of the inhabitants, still the mere sight of the giants, Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai struck terror in their hearts. These giants were immensely tall and received their names because of their gigantic stature. The strongest

among them was Ahiman. When one was beholding him he fancied himself standing at the foot of a mountain that was about to fall. He would exclaim, "What is this that is falling upon me?"¹ Sheshai was as strong as marble, therefore the name.² The mighty strides of the third brother made ridges in the ground he walked upon, so they called him Talmi.³ Not only were the sons of Anak of such strength and size, but his daughter was also, as the spies had occasion to know. For, as these reached the city of Hebron called Kiriath-Arba, "City of Four"—because of the four giants, Anak and his three sons—they looked for a hiding place. Finding a cave, they entered therein. But how bewildered were they to find out that that which they believed to be a cave was only the rind of a huge pomegranate which the giant's daughter had thrown away. Later, however, when this giantess remembered that she must not let the skin of the pomegranate lie there, she went to the place, picked up the rind with the twelve men in it, as one picks up an egg-shell, and threw it into the garden, without even noticing the twelve men hidden therein. . . . And when the twelve men left their hiding place, they remarked one to the other: "Behold the strength and stature of this woman and judge by her the strength of the men!"

¹ From Ahi-man—who is that?

² "Shayish" marble.

³ Telem, a ridge, bed, or furrow.

And the opportunity to find out the strength of the men soon presented itself, for as soon as the three giants heard of the presence of the Israelitish men, they pursued them, but the Israelites had already found out what sort of men they were, even before they caught them. For one of the giants shouted and the spies fell down as dead men. And the Israelites would have certainly not escaped from the hands of the giants had not Moses given them two weapons against their adversaries—his staff and the secret of the Ineffable Name. These giants were of such enormous size that the spies (who were of no mean height themselves) heard them say while pointing at them: "Look at these grasshoppers by the trees who look like men."

The spies, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, resolved to warn the people against going to the land of Canaan. They would rather go back to Egypt, for the people were tired from their endless journey in the wilderness, waiting daily for the manna and following Moses' ideas. The words of the other spies nearly influenced Caleb to yield to them. But he ran away to the cave of Machpelah at Hebron where lay the Patriarchs and he offered his prayer to them:

"Holy Patriarchs! Be you my strength and pray God's courage for me that I do not follow the wicked counsel of the spies, and may I be as steadfast as Joshua. . . ."

When Caleb returned from Hebron, he insisted that the spies take along some of the fruit of the land to show the people the excellence thereof. They cut down one vine which was so heavy that eight of them had to carry it. One of them carried one pomegranate, and one carried one fig. The vine was of such gigantic size that the wine pressed from its grapes supplied all that was necessary for all the sacrificial libations of Israel throughout their entire wandering.

After the lapse of forty days, the spies returned to Moses and the people. And they brought back their report:

“We went to the land to which you sent us; and it indeed abounds in milk and honey; and this is some of its fruit. But the people who dwell in the land are fierce, the cities are fortified, and very great; and moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the South Country, and the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites in the highlands, and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan.”

As soon as the spies completed their report, Joshua arose to contradict them, but the spies gave him no chance to speak, calling to him:

“You have no right to speak at all, son of Nun! You are a single man without son or daughter, and what do you care if we cause our children and

wives to perish in the attempt to enter the land of Canaan?"

Now Caleb rose to speak. He had given his comrades a false impression of himself, and thinking that his report would corroborate theirs, the spies did not hinder his speaking. And when Caleb began his introductory remark: "This is not the only thing the son of Amram did to us." All the people were silent and Caleb continued:

"—the son of Amram, Moses, took us out from Egypt, divided the sea for us, gave us manna for food. Even if he were to command us to ascend to heaven upon ladders, we should obey him. More so, when Moses tells us to go up to our land, we shall without a doubt take possession of it, and will certainly be able to conquer it."

Caleb's mighty voice of assurance did leave its impression upon the people, but the other ten spies insisted:

"We shall not be able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we. It is a land that eats up its inhabitants. . . . Moreover, all the people we saw there are of a gigantic stature. We looked, in comparison to them, as grasshoppers, as indeed we were so in our own sight."

The people, lacking in faith as they did, believed implicitly the words of the spies. And they began to weep and lament:

"Why did God bring us to this land to fall by the sword. Our wives and babies will be taken captive."

In the meantime, in order to have their report accepted, the spies went to their tents, dressed up as mourners and began bitterly to weep and lament:

"Woe is me! Woe is me for my sons, my daughters, my kinsmen! We are all doomed to destruction, for the men we saw in our Promised Land are not like ordinary mortals. Strong are they and mighty. To look at their iron faces is a terror. . . . One nail of their fingers is sufficient to stop up a spring of water. Woe is to us! We are all doomed to fall in their hands."

And upon hearing this, their household burst into tears and lamentations. And the lamentation soon became general and all the encampment wept and lamented. (That night was the ninth of Ab, and God had decreed then: "You weep today without a cause. In the future, this day will be a day of mourning—a day upon which many misfortunes will befall you.")

The people did not stop at that. They began to shout one to the other:

"Let us appoint a chief and return to Egypt."

And immediately they appointed the malcontents of old, Dathan and Abiram, as leaders instead of Moses and Aaron, to return to Egypt to

slavery. . . . Joshua and Caleb tried to persuade the people not to sin thus against God, pleading with them and saying:

“The land which we went to explore is an exceedingly good land. If God is still pleased with us, he will surely bring us into that land—a land which is abundant in milk and honey. Only do not rebel against God, fear not the people of the land, we shall consume them as one consumes bread. Their defense is taken away from over them, and God is with us. Fear them not.”

But the people would not hearken to these words of wisdom. Nay, more: they even considered stoning the two honest scouts. And they also sought to lay hands on Moses and on Aaron—but God sent his Cloud of Glory as a protection for them. God, hereupon, determined to destroy the wicked spies and to punish severely the rest of the people. And then, did the Glory of God appear in the Tabernacle.

Again God's wrath was enkindled against His people; His patience, as it were, wore out, and He said to Moses:

“Go and tell Israel the following:

“‘You kindle my anger on account of the very benefits I have shown you. Whatever I do for you, you not only do not appreciate but you complain against Me and scorn Me. You refuse to trust Me

notwithstanding all the great signs and wonders I have performed in your midst. I will afflict you with a pestilence and will disinherit you. You, Moses, will I make into a nation greater and mightier than the Israelites.' ”

And Moses stood up again to plead with God for the people who had mistreated him and distrusted God, also. He said :

“If a three-legged chair could not withstand the moment of Thy wrath, how shall a one-legged chair endure it. Thou art about to destroy the descendants of the three Patriarchs, how may I hope that my descendants will meet with better fate? And this is not the only reason for which Thou shouldst preserve Israel. Wert Thou to destroy Israel, all the Canaanite nations would say: ‘Because God was unable to bring His people into the land which He promised to them, He has, therefore, slain them in the wilderness.’ ”

Not being able to obtain God’s forgiveness, Moses pleaded with Him to deal with His people according to His virtue of mercy. And God answered Moses and said :

“I shall show My mercy toward My children. I have pardoned as you have requested! But—as surely as I live, and as surely as the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God—none of the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt, and have tested Me these

ten times and have not listened to Me, shall see the land which I have promised with an oath to their ancestors, neither shall any of those who have scorned Me see it. Tell the children of Israel:

“Your little children of whom you said, would be captives of war, them I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have rejected. But as for you—your dead bodies shall fall in the wilderness. And your children shall be wanderers in the wilderness for forty years, and shall suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your carcasses have all decayed in the wilderness. After the number of days in which you spied the land—forty days—for every day a year, shall you bear your iniquities. And you shall know My displeasure!”

The most terrible and immediate punishment fell upon the spies who with their wicked tongues had brought about the whole disaster. God meted out to them measure for measure. A pestilence broke out in their midst and they died with a horrible death—their tongues became filled with worms that crawled out from there to the rest of their body. . . . But God did show His mercy to the sinners by cautioning them through Moses:

“The Amalekites and the Canaanites are before you, and you shall fall by the sword, if you presume to go up yourselves. And because you have turned away from the Lord, He will not be with you.

Tomorrow, turn and get into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea."

But many of the Israelites rose early in the morning and said:

"We are here, ready to go up to the place God has promised to us." And though Moses warned them against going, they presumed to go up without Moses or the Ark of the Covenant. Then the Amalekite and the Canaanite who dwelt in the hill-country came down, and smote them and beat them down. (They named that place Hormah, signifying Destruction.)

Now, the Israelites became very distressed, they said: "God our Lord has surely cast us away from His presence, for all our iniquities and for our unfaithfulness." And in order to comfort and encourage them God said to Moses:

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'When you come into the land whither I bring you, then it shall be that, when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall set apart a portion for a gift unto the Lord.'"

This and many other laws pertaining to sacrifices God told Moses to instruct the Israelites—a sure sign to the people that God did not mean to be angry with them forever. But when Moses announced the laws of sacrifices to the people a dispute arose between the Israelites and the converts

to the Israelitish faith, the former declared that they alone and not the others were to make offerings to God in His sanctuary. And God called to Moses and said to him:

“Speak to the children of Israel:

“O Congregation! There shall be one statute for you and for the stranger that sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations, as you are so shall the stranger be before the Lord!”

2. The Insurrection of Korah

Korah was very rich, for he obtained his wealth in the following manner: When Joseph, during the lean years, had amassed great wealth through the sale of grain, he erected three great buildings—one hundred cubits wide, one hundred cubits long and one hundred cubits high. He filled these buildings with money and delivered them to Pharaoh. Korah had discovered one treasure house and became very rich. On account of his prodigious wealth he became very proud, and as he was of Moses' tribe, he was under the impression that Moses slighted him. Especially did his wife add fuel to the fire of hatred that he felt toward his kinsman.

After the consecration of the Levites by Moses, Korah returned home, and as his wife noticed that he was entirely shaved of his hair, she said to him:

"Who has thus disgraced you?"

"Moses," answered Korah, and continued: "he shaved off the hair of his sons, too."

"But," indignantly said Korah's wife, "the disgrace of his sons meant nothing to the son of Amram as long as he was able to make a fool of you!"

And Korah's wife said to him, furthermore:

"Moses took all the rulership to himself and his family. He became king; his brother, he appointed as high priest, his nephews, as priests, to whom you, as Levites of lesser importance, are to give a tithe of what little you get from the people. . . . It is they, the family of Aaron—the priests—who are to receive from the people, their presents, their first ripe fruits, their tithes, and the very meat of their sacrifices."

These words of his wife penetrated deeply into the proud heart of Korah, and, his vanity hurt, he pondered thus:

"My grandfather, Kohath, had four sons: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Amram, as the first-born, had his sons Moses and Aaron appointed each as leader—one king and one high priest. Have not I, the son of Izhar, the second son of Kohath, the rightful claim to be the prince of the Kohathites? But Moses passed me by, intentionally and appointed Elizaphan, the son of Uzziel, youngest son of my grandfather, as prince of

the Kohathites. Therefore, will I now stir up a rebellion against Moses."

Korah was not single-handed, either. There gathered about him two hundred and fifty men of high rank, and also the malcontents of old. Dathan and Abiram, the Reubenites. For the Reubenites who dwelt at the south side of the encampment were near the sons of Kohath, who also dwelt at the south side of the Tabernacle. (And there is, indeed, truth in the adage: "Woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbor.")

Now, Korah began his rebellious actions. First, he tried to make Moses' laws appear ridiculous in the eyes of the people. Moses, had, shortly before, commended Israel about the law of Zizith, the fringes in the borders of their garments, and, that one thread in those fringes had to be made of blue. Korah had garments entirely of blue made for his company, and, arrayed in them, they appeared before Moses and asked of him:

"Moses, if a cloak is made entirely of blue wool, is it exempt from the commandment of the Zizith?"

"No," answered Moses, "a cloak entirely made of blue must also have the fringes on its border, as I taught you."

Then ridiculed Korah:

"One thread of blue in a fringe suffices to fulfil the commandment, should not a whole garment

of blue answer the requirements of the law?"

And he further asked of Moses:

"Must a Mezuzah be attached to the door-post of a house filled with holy books?"

"Yes," answered Moses, "the Mezuzah must be attached to all door-posts regardless of what the house is filled with."

"Such irrational laws!" exclaimed Korah. "Two hundred and seventy-five sections of the Torah are not sufficient, but two sections attached to a door-post are! Such laws have certainly not been originated from God, but from Moses himself. Hence, Moses is not His prophet, nor Aaron His High Priest."

With speeches like these, Korah went around from tent to tent inciting Israel to overthrow Moses. And in order to appear as the champion of the people against a law of oppression, Korah invented the following story which he recited to them:

"There lived near my place a widow with her two daughters. She owned a field which produced barely enough to keep them alive. When the woman set out to plow her field, Moses appeared to her and said: 'You shall not plow with an ox and an ass together.' So she plowed the field only with the ass that she hired. When, after the plowing, the widow began to sow, and wanted to sow various seeds, Moses came and said: 'You shall

not sow with diverse seeds.' She obeyed him, and when the harvest time came and the woman was about to reap her produce, Moses appeared to the widow and ordered her: 'You shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor gather the gleanings of the harvest, but to leave them for the poor.' When she complied with all commandments of Moses, and was about to thresh the grain, Moses appeared to her again and said: 'Give the heave-offering and the first tithe and the second tithe for the priests and Levites.' When at last the woman became aware of the fact that it would be impossible for her to live on the produce of the field after giving away so much of it, she decided to sell her field and buy two ewes. Now she would be able to drink of their milk undisturbed, use their wool, eat their younglings.

"However the woman was mistaken. When the firstlings of the sheep were born, Aaron appeared and claimed it, for the first-born, according to law, belonged to the priest. When shearing time approached, and the woman received a goodly portion of wool from her sheep, the priest came again to demand the first of the fleece of the sheep, which belonged to him. Not being able to stand it any longer, the woman slaughtered her sheep, thinking that now she would at least be able to eat of the meat unmolested. But, not so! Aaron appeared again and demanded, in accordance with

the law of Moses, the shoulder, the two cheeks and the maw. When the simple woman heard this, she clapped her hands, and exclaimed: 'Alas! Even the slaughtering of my sheep did not deliver me out of the hands of the sacred robber! I shall see to it that neither he nor I will have any of the meat. Let the meat be consecrated to the sanctuary!' But the priest said, smilingly: 'Now, woman, the entire meat belongs to me, for the law says: "Everything devoted in Israel is yours. It shall be all yours."' Then he departed, taking with him the meat of the sheep, and leaving behind him the widow and her daughters, weeping bitterly."

"Thus," concluded Korah, "would be the fate of a widow who would have to eke out a living from a parcel of field left to her by her husband. For the law will always be on the side of the makers of the law. . . ."

With stories of this nature, Korah succeeded in arousing the rebellious spirit of the Israelites. And Korah's company gathered about Moses and Aaron saying:

"The burden that you lay upon us is heavier than that laid upon us by the Egyptians. Further: We all heard God say to us on Mount Sinai 'I am the Lord, your God,' wherefore, then do you consider yourself greater than the rest of the people of God? You took too much upon yourself!"

Moses took Korah's transgression much to

heart, for he thought to himself that perhaps, after the many sins of Israel against God, he might not succeed in obtaining His forgiveness. And Moses endeavored, therefore, to pacify Korah and his people, but it was all in vain. He sent to call for Dathan and Abiram, but they refused, saying:

“We shall not come up! Why do you set yourself up as master over us? What benefit have we received from you? You took us out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in this wilderness. . . . Have you brought us to that land flowing with milk and honey that you promised us? Have you given us the inheritance of fields and vineyards? What? Do you think that you put out our eyes without being able to see what you did to us?—We shall not go up!”

Moses was very indignant by this message and expressing his anger, he said to God:

“O Lord, when these people bring their offerings to Thee, do not accept them. For, what have I done to them that they treat me so? Have I taken anything from them? Have I hurt any of them?”

And Moses sent the following message to Korah:

“Be you and all your congregation before the Lord, tomorrow. Aaron will be there, too. Everyone of your men shall take his fire-pan, and put

incense upon them, and come before the Lord. You and your two hundred and fifty men will fill their fire-pans, and so will Aaron do. In the morning, the Lord will show us who are His, and who is holy. For him whom God will choose, he will be holy. Remember sons of Levi—you are taking too much upon yourselves!”

On the morrow, Korah and his company came before the door of the Tabernacle with their fire-pans and incense. And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation.

And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron saying:

“Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”

Both fell upon their faces and offered the following prayer:

“O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh! Shall one man sin and Thy wrath be upon all the people?”

And God spoke to Moses, saying:

“Speak unto the congregation, thus: ‘Go away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan and Abiram!’”

Moses, thereupon, arose, followed by the elders of Israel, and they all went toward the rebels. On his way Moses warned the people:

“Depart, I beg of you from the tents of these

wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be swept away in all their sins."

The people, faithful to Moses did accordingly, while Dathan, Abiram, their wives, sons, and little ones, came out and stood arrogantly at the door of their tents. And Moses said:

"Hear you all: Hereby shall you know that God had sent me to do all I did, and that I did not do them of my own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, and be visited after the visitations of all men—then the Lord had not sent me. But if God make a new thing, that the ground open its mouth and swallow them up, with all belonging to them, and they go down alive in the pit, then shall you understand that these men have scorned the Almighty."

Hardly had Moses made an end of talking, when the ground that was under them did cleave asunder. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. So they, and all that belonged to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. Thus they perished from among the people. And all Israel that were round about them, fled at their shout, saying: "Let us flee, lest the earth swallow us up!" While the two hundred and fifty men who came to offer their incense found their death in a different manner: a

heavenly fire that descended upon their incense, devoured them. But though Korah stood together with those who offered the incense, yet after being consumed by fire, rolled like a ball to the place where the earth opened its mouth, to be swallowed up there. While the company of Korah were thus severely punished, they kept up repeating: "Moses and the Torah are true, but we are liars."

But the sons of Korah did not die, because they did not take part in the insurrection against Moses, and God does not punish sons for the sins of their fathers, every man is put to death for his own iniquity. And one more of Korah's company did not die—that was On, son of Peleth. He was saved by his wife. She pleaded with him: "What benefit will you derive from this quarrel? Either Moses is master and you are the disciple, or if Korah becomes master you will be his disciple." Realizing the truth of his wife's arguments, he obeyed her and stayed at home while his companions met their death.

After the death of the two hundred and fifty followers of Korah who perished at the offering of the incense, Eleazar, son of Aaron, was ordered to take up the fire-pans out of the burning, so that out of these brazen fire-pans, shall be made a covering for the altar. This covering of the altar should serve as a memorial to the children

of Israel, that no one, who is not of Aaron's descendants shall come near to burn incense before the Lord.

Peace, was not, however, immediately established among the Israelites. For on the morrow after the catastrophe took place, there arose another rebellion against Moses. The people shouted to Moses and Aaron: "You have killed the people of the Lord!"—The people then accused Moses of the death of so many of their nobles. And the Lord became so greatly incensed against Israel, that He said to Moses and Aaron:

"Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment."

And immediately a plague began to kill many of the people. Moses, thereupon, said to Aaron:

"Take your fire-pan, put fire therein from off the altar, and lay incense thereon, carry it quickly unto the congregation and make atonement for them, for the wrath is gone out from God—the plague is begun!"

Aaron did accordingly. He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. But fourteen thousand and seven hundred met their death by the plague in addition to those that died a day before because of Korah's insurrection.

Now God wanted that once and for all the people should recognize Aaron's authority and his

selection to the priesthood. Thereupon, God said to Moses:

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they take them rods, one for each tribe, every rod should bear the name of the tribe. And it shall come to pass, that the man whom I shall choose, his rod shall bud. Therewith will I cause all complaints to cease from My people."

The people did so. Moses took all the rods and laid them before God in the Tabernacle. And on the morrow when Moses went into the tent of Testimony, and behold, the rod of Aaron for the tribe of Levi budded, blossomed and bore ripe almonds. Moses brought out the rods to all the people, and they looked, and took away their rods, becoming convinced in the selection of Aaron by God. Aaron's rod was placed before the Holy Ark as a perpetual remembrance.

3. *At the Waters of Meribah*

Korah's rebellion took place during Israel's stay in Kadesh-Barnea. They remained in this place for nineteen years, and then wandered continually from place to place through the desert. At last with the fortieth year of their wandering reached and while the old generation that was taken out from Egypt had died in penalty for its sin, the young generation returned again to

Kadesh-Barnea. The children of Israel loved this place which was endeared to them because of many years of staying there. But at this time Miriam, Moses' sister died and in consequence of her death, the well of water, that wandered together with Israel for the merits of Miriam disappeared. And immediately the lack of water was felt.

Moses and Aaron were sitting in their tent at this time mourning the loss of their sister, and knew nothing about the plight of the people. But a motley mob soon collected and kept increasing as they went to their leaders. When Moses saw the multitude approaching, he said to his brother :

"What may these people want?"

"They surely are coming to condole us in our misery . . ." said Aaron.

But Moses said :

"Alas, my brother. To judge by their angry looks this is another insurrection. What is amiss now? Oh, what a stiff-necked people this is!"

Soon enough Moses heard the oft-repeated cry of the people :

"Would that we have perished when our kinsmen perished before God! Why have you brought this congregation into the wilderness to die there of thirst, we and our cattle? And wherefore have you made us to come out from Egypt to bring us unto this evil place? It is no place of seed or of

figs, or of vines or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink."

When Moses and Aaron saw the rising anger of the people, they feared violence and hastened to the Tabernacle, to implore God's mercy for His people and also to find shelter there from the violent rage of the Israelites. God spoke to Moses saying:

"Take your rod, and assemble all the people, you and your brother, Aaron. Then speak to the rock in their sight that it give forth its water. You shall bring forth to them water out of the rock, for them and for their cattle."

Moses then took with him the rod upon which the Ineffable Name of God was inscribed and accompanied by Aaron, betook himself to the rock to do as God had told him. And all Israel followed him. But the people stopped at every rock they saw on the way thinking that Moses would draw water from it. As they went for a time and no water was given them, the grumblers began to incite the people thus:

"Don't you know that the son of Amram was a shepherd in his youth, and it was then that he learned the nature of the wilderness, and knows therefore, what place exactly is rich in water. Moses is therefore leading us to such a place, then he will declare to us that he caused water to come out of the rock just at his bidding. . . . If

he is actually able to draw water out of rocks then let him fetch it out of any one of the rocks we wish him to."

Now, throughout the forty years Moses endeavored to refrain from addressing the people harshly. On this occasion, however, he was so overcome by his rage, that he shouted at the multitude:

"Hear now, O you rebels, you stiff-necked ones: You do not think that I will be able to draw water from this rock?"

Now carried away by his rage, Moses still further forgot himself, and instead of speaking to the rock as God had commanded him, he struck it. And as Moses had not done according to God's command, the rock also did not obey at once, and sent forth only a few drops of water, so that the mockers cried:

"For whom is this water, for sucklings or for those weaned?"

Moses now grew angrier still and for a second time smote the rock from which gushed forth streams so mighty that many of those who complained against Moses met their death in them, and at the same time water streamed from all the stones and rocks that were in the desert.

But Moses' and Aaron's doom was now fated. They too, God decreed, would not see the land just like all the other people of the generation that

left Egypt. God said to Moses and his brother:

"Because you belived not in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, I bade you to speak to the rock and you smote it—therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I promised to give them."

And Moses said to God:

"Verily, my God, I have sinned in my going contrary to Thy command, but why should my brother, Aaron, suffer, too?"

To which God made this reply:

"Aaron saw what you were about to do and he did not stop you."

Then Moses prayed to God for forgiveness:

"O Lord, we pray Thee, pardon our sin!"

But God replied:

"This sin committed in the sight of all Israel cannot be forgiven you. Had you but spoken to the rock, to draw water therefrom, you would have sanctified My Name, that Israel would revere Me forever. They would say, 'Even a silent rock obeys God, more so must a living man do.'"

And Moses said to God:

"Now everybody will say that we also died in the wilderness like the 'Generation of the Desert. . . .'"

To which God said:

"There will be several passages in the Torah

that will account for the real cause of your death in the wilderness. And the future generations will know that your only sin was the matter of the water of Meribah."

That place was called Meribah, because of the *strife* Israel had had with God there, and which brought about the decree of death for Moses and Aaron.

4. *Last Day of Aaron*

When Aaron's last day on this mortal earth was reached, God said to Moses:

"Moses, My faithful servant, I have an important matter to communicate to you. Aaron, your brother shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have promised to the Israelites, because you have rebelled against My word at the waters of Meribah."

When Moses heard these words, he felt very bad and did not know what to do. He wept very much all through the night and early in the morning he rose and went to Aaron's tent to execute God's command, informing him of his impending death. But as it was impossible for him to do it, he asked Aaron and Eleazar, his son, to walk with him outside of the encampment. And as they were walking they reached Mount Hor. Reaching it, the three of them ascended on it. Moses now

gently began to inform Aaron of his coming death. He said to him:

"My brother, Aaron! Has God given anything into your keeping?"

"Yes," said Aaron, "the altar and the table upon which is the showbread He has given in my charge."

And Moses added:

"God wants you to give back now all that He gave in your custody."

And Aaron in his simplicity said:

"What are the other things He left in my charge?"

To which Moses said:

"Has God entrusted His light with you?"

Aaron replied:

"Not one light has He entrusted me with but all the seven lights of the candle-sticks that burn now in the sanctuary."

But Moses remarked:

"I am referring to one light, especially, the light of God, the Soul. . . ."

When Aaron heard this last sentence of Moses he trembled greatly, saying to Moses:

"Ah, brother mine! Throes of death have befallen me!"

And while talking, a cave opened up before them, whereupon Moses requested his brother to

enter it, which he consented. But Moses said to Aaron:

"My brother, it is not proper that you enter an unknown cave dressed in your eight priestly garments. Who knows if the cave is clean. Perhaps there are graves in it."

Aaron agreed with his brother and he stripped himself of his garments and gave them to his son, Eleazar. Moses said then to Eleazar:

"You wait for us until we return from the cave."

Moses and Aaron entered the cave. They found there a couch spread, a table prepared, a candle burning, while angels surrounded the couch. Aaron then said to his brother:

"How long, O my brother, will you conceal from me the commission God had entrusted you concerning me? Even if it were to refer to my death, I should take it with a cheerful countenance."

To which Moses, in sadness made the following reply:

"Since you, yourself, speak of death, I will acknowledge that God's words to me do concern your death. But I was afraid to make it known to you. But look now, your death is not as that of other creatures of flesh and blood. Do you see the angels of God who have come to stand by you in

your parting hour?—Now, brother mine, lie down on this bed—”

Aaron did so.

“Spread your hands!”

Aaron did so.

“Close your eyes,” added Moses.

Aaron did so.

“Close your mouth.”

Aaron did that, too.

Thereupon God, Himself, descended and kissing Aaron received his soul.

And thus Aaron died not by the hands of the Angel of Death, but by a kiss from God. Moses wept and said:

“I pray that my death should be like yours, brother mine!”

Moses could not linger in the cave any longer for God bade him leave it, and no sooner did he leave it when the cave vanished, so that none might see Aaron’s grave.

When Eleazar saw Moses returning alone, he said to him:

“O, my master Moses, where is my father?”

Moses replied:

“He has entered Paradise.”

Both sorrowfully returned to the camp. And when the people saw Moses and Eleazar return without Aaron, they were not in the mood of believing the story of Aaron’s death. They could

not believe that he who had stayed death, should himself die. Some people declared, that Moses did away with Aaron because he was jealous of his popularity; others said, Eleazar killed his old father to succeed him as high-priest. Satan had so incited the people against Moses and Eleazar that they were at the point of stoning them. And Moses offered the following prayer to God:

“Deliver us, O God, from this undeserved suspicion, and also show the people Aaron’s bier.”

God said to His angels:

“Lift up on high the bier upon which lies My friend, Aaron, so that Israel may know that he is dead.”

The angels did as they were bidden, and Israel then saw Aaron’s bier floating in the air, while chanting thus:

The law of truth was in his mouth,
Unrighteousness was not found in his lips.
May he come in peace,
May he come in peace!

When all Israel were convinced that Aaron died they mourned for him thirty days. They lamented him and said:

“The righteous man passed away, the peace maker has departed.”

5. Og, the Great Giant

Og, the giant, was a descendant of one of the fallen angels. He lived for many, many years. At the time of the flood, he came to Noah and asked of him to admit him into the ark. One look at his gigantic stature convinced Noah that the waters of the flood would only reach up to the knees of that giant. . . . However, as Og insisted he allowed him to sit on one of the beams of the ark, which stuck out of the top, as there was no room for him inside of the ark. Noah doled out the daily food of the giant through a hole in the roof of the ark purposely bored out for it. Og, in return for this favor promised on an oath never to do harm to any of the descendants of Noah, and furthermore, that he, Og, and his descendants would be slaves to Noah and his descendants forever.

Og kept his promise. In the war of the four kings against the five, it was Og who ran to bring the tidings to Abraham that his nephew, Lot, was taken captive. (But Og had another reason for doing this. He thought "Abraham will surely be killed in this war; then will I take his beautiful Sarah to wife. . . ." But God punished him for harboring such a thought. He granted Og life for five hundred years more, then to be killed by a descendant of Sarah, Moses.)

Nimrod gave Og as a gift to Abraham, and he was his slave, remaining in Abraham's service until Isaac's marriage, when Abraham set the bondman free. This giant never in all his life made use of a wooden chair or a wooden bed, for these would have broken down under his heavy weight. He used to sit on iron chairs, and he slept in iron beds, especially made for him. Og daily devoured a thousand oxen, and drank a similar number of measures of liquids. After he was set free, God caused him to become a king, and during his reign he founded sixty cities which he surrounded with high walls, the lowest of which was not less than sixty miles in height.

When, therefore, it came to pass that Moses had to wage war against Og, he feared him greatly, not only because of his gigantic strength and huge size, but also because Moses thought: "I am one hundred and twenty years old, whereas Og is more than five hundred. Surely he has attained that old age because of his good deeds. How can I withstand him, who escaped the sword of Amraphel?"

But God said to Moses:

"What matters to you Og and his huge stature? It is decreed by Me, since Og looked with evil eyes upon Jacob and his family when they entered Egypt, that he would be destroyed by the Israel-

ites when they would be about to enter the Holy Land."

When Og heard how the Israelites conquered Sihon, the king of the Amorites, he said:

"The Israelitish camp is three miles in circumference, I shall now, therefore, uproot a mountain three miles in circumference and cast it upon the camp of Israel and cover them up with it."

He did accordingly, and uprooted a mountain of three miles, laid it upon his head and came to the wall of Edrei, and sat down, on it, with the mountain on his head like a cap, and his legs reaching the ground. . . .

Moses and Israel neared Edrei. Moses said to his people:

"Let us lodge here overnight and in the morning, we shall attack the city."

They did so, and when they rose in the morning, and got ready to attack the city, Moses looked up and saw the huge mountain on the top of the wall and said to himself:

"Is it possible that the people of Edrei built such an immense wall on top of their wall in one night?"

And God said to him:

"Fear not, the huge mountain that you see obscuring even the light of the sun is not a second wall built overnight, as you think. It is the giant,

Og. But be courageous! I shall deliver him into your hands, and you will do to him as you did to Sihon, the Amorite."

Now God caused an innumerable multitude of ants to come down on the mountain, they furrowed through it, until it slipped from Og's head down upon his neck. He endeavored to throw it from him, but he could not. For his teeth extended to the right and to the left of his mouth, like tusks of an elephant, and thus the mountain was kept in its place upon his neck. When Moses saw this, he took an axe ten cubits long, and jumped ten cubits into the air, dealing a blow to Og's ankle, which caused his death. The mountain fell off Og's shoulders when he was killed, and a catastrophe which was inevitable, was averted by God.

In order to form an idea of the gigantic stature of Og, it is necessary to relate what a gravedigger, Abba Saul, by name, told in later years:

"Once I hunted a stag which fled into the thigh-bone of a dead man. I pursued it and ran along three miles in the hollow of the bone, yet I did not reach the end. When I returned later, I was told that that bone was of the body of Og, the great giant, whom Moses felled."

6. Blessings Instead of Curses

Now Moab began to be afraid of the Israelites. The king of Moab at that time was Balak, who

was a great magician, exercising his sorcery in this fashion: He had constructed a bird, with its feet, trunk and head of gold, its mouth of silver, and its wings of bronze. For its tongue, he put in it the tongue of the bird, Yadu'a. This magic bird was placed by a window where the sun shone by day and the moon by night, and there it would stay for seven days. All these days, Balak would bring to it sacrifices. At the end of the week, the bird would begin to move its tongue and reveal secrets. One day this bird's wings were suddenly burned by a flame, and Balak took it to be a result of the Israelites being near his territory.

As the Moabites learned that the Israelites conquered their enemies by supernatural means, they sent to inquire of Midian, where Moses spent his youth, as to the nature of this leader of Israel. And the Midianites sent them back this reply:

"Moses' strength is in his mouth. Not by strength of his hand does he gain but by his prayers—by the words of his mouth."

The Balak rejoiced greatly; and said:

"In this case we need not fear him. I shall send to him a man whose strength lies in his mouth as well. I shall call for the ancient, experienced sorcerer, Balaam, son of Beor."

And he sent to him thus:

"To Balaam, son of Beor, in Pethor, from

Balak, son of Zippor, King of Moab, Greetings!

"A people has come out from Egypt; they have covered the face of the earth, and have settled now next to me. Come, I beg of you, curse this people for me—they are too strong for me—so that I shall be able to withstand them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whom you bless, is blessed, and whom you curse, is cursed."

Then the leaders of Moab and the leaders of Midian departed with the fee for cursing in their hands, and when they came to Balaam they delivered to him Balak's message. To which they also added:

"Balak will confer great honor on you. Come, therefore and curse this people."

But Balaam answered:

"You lodge here tonight and in the morning I will tell you what God has said to me."

Now the Midianites left immediately, for they made a token that if Balaam would not go with them straightway, God would turn to naught his curses. But the Moabites stayed on.

God said to Balaam:

"You shall not go with the Moabites."

And Balaam said:

"I shall then curse the Israelites from this place."

"You shall not curse My people."

"Well then, let me go to Balak and I will bless Thy people"—retorted Balaam.

"This people needs neither your honey nor your sting. This people is blessed," said God to Balaam.

And in the morning, Balaam did not want to tell the messengers of Balak the real reason for his refusing to go with them, but he said:

"God said to me: 'go not with these men, they are beneath your dignity. . . .'"

Balak sent again more honorable messengers to Balaam, and these princes said to him:

"Thus said Balak: 'Let nothing hinder you from coming unto me. I will honor you greatly. Whatsoever you will ask me for, I shall do. Come, curse this people for me.'"

And Balaam said to the messengers:

"Go and tell your king: 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and of gold, I could not go beyond the words of God, to do anything small or great.' However, stay here overnight, that I may know what the Lord will speak unto me again."

That night God said to Balaam:

"If you wish to go, since the men came to call

you again—go with them. But remember: only the word which I will put in your mouth shall you speak.”

Balaam rose early in the morning, saddled his ass and went with the princes of Moab. Although God had given Balaam permission to go on his journey, still His anger was great, for He knew his evil intention. Now an angel of God placed himself in the way to oppose him. Balaam was riding upon his ass and his two sons, the magicians, Jannes and Jambres with him. When the ass saw the angel of God standing in the road with his drawn sword in his hand, she turned aside out of the way and went into the field. Then Balaam struck her to make her turn into the road. The angel appeared again, whereupon Balaam rode in a very narrow path in a vineyard, where there was a fence on both sides. When the animal saw the angel again, she pressed herself against the fence, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. For this, too, he struck the ass.

But the angel of God went further and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. At this, the animal lay down altogether and would not budge from the spot. Balaam flew into a great rage, and struck her very much. God thereupon, opened the mouth of the ass and she said to Balaam:

"What have I done to you that you should have struck me these three times?"

Balaam said in great amazement:

"Because you have made fun of me. I would there were a sword in my hand, then I would have killed you!"

To which the ass replied:

"You cannot kill me without a sword, how then do you expect to kill an entire nation only with the words of your mouth. . . . Am I not your ass on which you have ridden all your life long until today? Have I ever been in the habit of treating you in this way?"

Balaam's short answer was:

"No."

The princes of Moab were greatly amazed at this miracle. The words the ass spoke as to the effect that he could not kill her without a sword, belittled Balaam in their sight.

Now God showed Balaam that not only is the tongue of man in His hand, but that even a dumb animal could talk at His command. And then, he opened up his eyes and he saw the angel of God standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand. He bowed his head and fell on his face. The angel said to him:

"Why have you struck your ass these three times? See, it is I who came to oppose you, for your way was contrary unto me. Your ass saw me

and turned aside from me these three times. Unless she had turned aside from me surely now I would have killed you and saved her life."

Then Balaam said to the angel of God:

"I have sinned; for I did not know that you stood in the way against me. Now therefore if my going displeases you, I will return home."

But the angel said to Balaam:

"Go with the men, but only speak what I tell you."

So Balaam continued his way.

When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at Ir of Moab, which is on the extreme boundary formed by the Arnon and said to him:

"Did I not send to call you, why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?"

Then Balaam said:

"See, I have come to you. Have I now any power to speak anything?—I must speak the word that God puts in my mouth."

So Balaam went with Balak and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. Balaam ascended Bamoth-baal, whence part of the Israelitish camp could be seen. He said to Balak:

"Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams."

Balak did so.

God met Balaam, and he said to Him:

"I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered up a bullock and a ram on every altar." And the Lord put the words in Balaam's mouth. He returned to Balak who stood by the altars, together with the princes of Moab. Balaam began:

"From Aram Balak brings me,
The King of Moab from the mountains of the
East:

'Come curse me Jacob,
And come, execrate Israel.'
How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed?
And how shall I execrate, whom God has not ex-
ecrated?

For, from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him:
Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.

Who has counted the dust of Jacob,
Or numbered the stock of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!"

And Balak said to Balaam:

"What have you done? I took you to curse my enemies but you blessed them instead."

But Balaam said:

"That which God puts in my mouth I must surely speak."

Another time Balak took up Balaam to curse Israel, only to be blessed by him. And finally Balak said:

"Neither curse them at all, nor bless them!"

And Balaam said:

"Did I not tell you: 'All that God will speak to me, that I must do?'"

Then Balak said:

"Come now, I will take you into another place, peradventure it will please God that you may curse them from there."

Balak, then, took Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looks out over the wilderness. When Balaam saw that it pleased God to bless Israel, he did not go to consult omens, as he was accustomed to do, but turned toward the wilderness; and as he looked, he saw the Israelites camped according to their tribes, and the spirit of God came upon him, and he uttered this oracle:

"The oracle of Balaam, son of Beor,
The oracle of him whose eye is opened.
The oracle of him who hears God's words,
Who sees the vision of God Almighty,
Fallen down, yet with opened eyes.

How goodly are your tents, O Jacob
Your dwelling places, O Israel!
Like valleys they are spread out,
Like gardens by the river side,
Like aloes which God has planted
Like cedars beside the waters.

Water shall flow from his branches,
And his seed shall be in many waters,
His king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.

God who brought him forth out of Egypt
Is for him like the lofty horns of a wild-ox.
He shall devour the nations, his adversaries,
And shall break their bones in pieces,
And pierce them through with his arrows.

He crouches, lies down like a lion,
Like a lioness; who dares stir him up?
Blessed are all who bless you.
And accursed all who curse you!"

Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam:

"I called you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them repeatedly. Now

therefore, hasten back to your home. I intended to confer great honor upon you, but, as it is, God has kept you back from receiving honor."

But Balaam said to Balak:

"Did I not say to your messenger whom you sent to me: 'If Balak should give his house full of silver and gold, I could not go contrary to the word of God, to do either good or bad of my own will? I must speak what God says.' Now, Balak, I am going to my people. Come let me tell you what this people shall do to your people in the days to come."

And thus he took up his parable and said:

"The oracle of Balaam, the son of Beor,
The oracle of him whose eye is opened,
The oracle of him who hears God's word,
And possesses the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
He who though prostrate has opened eyes.

I see him, but not now
I behold him, but not nigh;
A star comes forth out of Jacob,
And a sceptre arises from Israel,
And shall smite through the corners of Moab,
And break down all the sons of Seth.⁴

⁴ All people, since Seth, son of Adam, was the ancestor of all people. See Num. XXIV, 17, Onkelos, Rashi and other commentaries.

Of Edom he shall take possession,
And Seir, his foe, shall do valiantly.
Out of Jacob shall one have dominion,
And shall destroy the remnant from the city."

And although Balaam was not able to curse Israel, he advised Balak how he could ruin Israel. He advised the king to open up stores wherein the daughters of Moab shall be the saleswomen. "The Israelites after having wandered so long through the wilderness would come to buy wares anxiously in the stores on the borders. While buying goods and sweetmeats of the beautiful maidens, they would fall in love with them, marry them, and be enticed to the worship of your God. That would arouse the wrath of Israel's God who is a very jealous God, and Israel would be punished. . . ."

The wicked advice of Balaam was successful: When Israel arrived in Shittim, the children of Israel became acquainted with the daughters of Moab, as Balaam had predicted. They married them, and began to worship Baal of Peor, and sinned greatly, by drinking and eating and committing immoral deeds.

God's anger was greatly aroused: twenty-four thousand men died by a plague that He sent upon them.

After the plague, God commanded Moses saying:

"Avenge the plague of Israel of the Midianites, afterward shall you be gathered to your people."

Now, Phineas, son of Eleazar, the priest, was put at the head of the Israelitish forces, to avenge Israel of the Midianites, who together with the Moabites, caused Israel to sin at Shittim.

Balaam, seeing how successful his advice was, came from his home at Aram, to receive his reward from Balak, but instead of a reward he met with his death.

And this is how it came about:

Phineas, who took with him to war the Holy Ark, the Urim and Thumim, took also the gold plate of the high-priest's mitre, as Moses had told him to do.

When at war, seeing that he was about to be captured by the Israelites, Balaam with his art of sorcery caused himself, as well as the five kings of Midian, to fly high up where no arrow could get them. It was then that Phineas held up the plate of gold of the priest's mitre upon which was inscribed the Ineffable Name of God, and Balaam and the five kings fell down and died. The old adage is certainly true: "When the camel went in search of horns, he lost his ears instead. . . ."

Israel was victorious in this war—another border people was overcome while they were at the gates of the land promised to them.

CHAPTER XXIX

"YOU SHALL SEE THE LAND
AFAR OFF..."

1. *Moses Appoints His Successor*

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

"Ascend the Mount of Abarim, and behold the land which I have promised to give unto the children of Israel. And after you have seen it, you also shall be gathered unto your people as Aaron, your brother, was gathered. Because you rebelled against My commandment in the wilderness of Zin, while the congregation quarreled, to sanctify Me at the waters before their eyes."

Moses said to God:

"Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh appoint a man over the people, to go out before them and to come in before them, that the people of God shall not be as sheep which have no shepherd."

And God said:

"Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him. Appoint him,

thereby, as chief over Eleazar, the high-priest, and over all the congregation, and invest him with authority in their sight. And you shall put of your honor upon him, that all the people of Israel may hearken. He shall stand before Eleazar, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord; at his word shall they go out and at his word shall they come in, both he, and all the children of Israel."

Moses did as God had commanded him.

And after these things Moses decided that he would write thirteen scrolls of the Torah, one for each tribe and one to be placed in the Holy Ark, so that if, in future days any one would wish to add to it or to detract from it, the one in the Holy Ark should remain untouched and in its original form. And Moses thought:

"If I busy myself with the writing of the Torah, which is a Tree of Life, death will not overtake me. . . ."

But God appeared to Moses and said:

"Complete your work, O Moses, for the day of your death draws nigh."

And Moses said:

"O God, let me, I pray Thee, live. Let Joshua be the chief of the people and I will serve him."

God consented to this, and Moses finished his work and went to the tent of Joshua to wait on

him. Joshua was at that time instructing the elders in the words of God, while Moses, unnoticed, stood at the entrance. When the people chanced to see Moses standing at the door, and Joshua sitting, they all exclaimed:

"How did you, O Son of Nun, dare to let Moses stand while you sat."

Joshua, upon hearing these words, lifted up his eyes and, seeing Moses at the door of his tent, rent his garments and cried:

"Woe is me! My teacher, my master, my sire! Come hither and head the congregation."

But Moses said meekly:

"From this day on, Joshua, you will be leader and I will serve you. By doing this will God keep me alive, so that I may see Israel enter the land God promised to give them."

Joshua and Moses then went to the Tabernacle and a pillar of cloud descended and separated them, and God spoke to Joshua. . . . When the cloud vanished, Moses said to Joshua:

"What has He spoken to you, my lord?"

"I cannot reveal it to you; when God spoke to you, did I know what He said?" answered Joshua.

When Moses heard this he said to himself with bitterness:

"Lord of the Universe! Until now I wished for life, but now I long for death. A hundred deaths are better than one jealousy."

2. *Death of Moses*

When Moses knew that his doom was sealed, that he would not enter the Holy Land, he put on sackcloth, threw himself upon ashes, and took his rod and drawing a circle about himself with it, said:

"I shall not move from this spot until my doom shall have been revoked."

And Moses prayed to God no less than five hundred and fifteen prayers that God should annul his decree with regard to his death. Heaven and earth and all their hosts trembled and they said one to the other: "Perhaps it is God's wish to destroy this world and to create a new one in its stead." But a Bath-Kol (a heavenly voice) came out and said:

"God's desire is not to create a new world, the commotion in nature is due to the fact that 'the spirit of all flesh is in God's hands' and even Moses' soul, whose end is now approaching. He is praying now. . . ."

What did the Holy One do? He proclaimed in heaven, and in all celestial courts and gates that they should not admit Moses' prayers, and that no angel was to carry Moses' prayers to Him, because the decree of death for Moses had been sealed. God quickly called to Him the Angel

Akhraziel, who is the heavenly herald, and bade him proclaim the following:

"Descend at once and lock every single gate in heaven, that Moses' prayer may not ascend unto it."

Then, at Moses' prayer, heaven and earth shook, and all the foundation thereof and all the creatures therein, for his prayer was like a sword that slashes and tears and cannot be stopped. For it was through the power of the Ineffable Name that Moses did it. (Angel Zagzagel, teacher and scribe of the celestial beings, taught it to him.) However, Moses' prayer was not accepted.

And when the Galgalim (celestial spheres) and the Seraphim saw that God did not accept the prayers of Moses, and did not take consideration of his greatness to grant Moses longer life, they opened their mouths and proclaimed the glory of God:

"Praised be the glory of the Lord from His place! For there is before Him neither injustice nor respect for persons toward the small or the great."

When Moses saw that God lent no ear to his prayers he sought to invoke God's mercy through the pleadings of others. He first betook himself to the Heaven and Earth and said:

"O Heaven and the Earth, I pray you, implore God's mercy for me. Perhaps for your sake will

He take pity on me and allow me to enter the Promised Land."

But Heaven and Earth replied:

"Before we implore God's mercy for you, we must rather do it for ourselves. 'For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall wax old like a garment.'"

Moses then hastened to the Sun and the Moon:

"Sun and Moon, plead you for me!" begged Moses.

"Before we pray to God for you," said the two great lights, "we must pray for ourselves. For, 'the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed.'"

Moses thereupon went to the Stars and the Planets and pleaded with them:

"Be you my intercessors. Plead for me with God."

But these replied:

"Before we venture to intercede for you, we must pray for ourselves. For 'all the host of heaven shall moulder away.'"

Moses then turned himself to the Hills and Mountains and besought them:

"O you ancient Mountains, pray to God for me!"

But these replied:

"'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed.' We must pray to Him for ourselves."

Finally Moses went to the Great Sea and said to it:

“Pray for me, O Sea!”

And the sea retorted:

“Son of Amram, what a difference between this day and that other day! Aren’t you the same Son of Amram who came to me with your staff, beat me, and divided me into twelve parts? It was I that was powerless then, because the Shekhinah was accompanying you on your right side. What, then, has happened to you?”

Upon being reminded of the miracles that he had performed in his youth, Moses burst into tears, crying:

“O that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me! In those days when I stood beside you, I was king of the world, and I commanded, but now I am a suppliant, and my prayers are not heeded.”

Straightway Moses betook himself to Mattatron, the Angel of the Face, and implored him thus:

“O, Mattatron, pray for me that God may show His mercy to me.”

But the Chief of the Angels replied:

“Moses, my master, why all this trouble that you put yourself to? I heard behind the curtain (that is drawn before the Lord) that your prayer in this matter will remain unanswered.”

At this Moses laid his hands upon his head and wept bitterly, saying:

"To whom shall I turn now, that he might implore God's mercy for me."

God now became very angry with Moses because he did not acquiesce in His decree. But Moses immediately began to recite:

"The Lord, the Lord!

God merciful and gracious

Long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth."

Immediately the divine spirit was cooled off from its anger, and God said to Moses:

"I have taken two vows, one that you are to die, and the other that Israel is to be destroyed. I cannot annul both of them. If you choose to live, then Israel must perish (for his old sin of the Golden Calf)."

To which Moses made the following reply:

"My Master! Thou approachest me with trickery. Thou dost indeed hold the rope at both ends. But I say: 'Rather shall Moses and a thousand of his kind perish, than a single one of Israel.'"

And Moses continued:

"Lord of the Universe! Shall the feet that trod the heavens, the face that beheld the Face of the Shekhinah, and the hands that received the Torah

from Thy hands be now covered with dust?"

But God said:

"Your death will serve as an example to people, who will say thus: 'If a man like Moses, who ascended to heaven, and was like one of the ministering angels, and spoke to God face to face, and received the Torah from the hands of God—had no way of escaping his doom, how much less can an ordinary mortal of flesh and blood, who comes before God without having done good deeds or studied the Torah, justify himself.' But I want to know why are you so grieved at your approaching death," concluded the Eternal.

And Moses said:

"The Angel of Death I fear!"

"I shall not deliver you into his hands," said God, and continued:

"So is the course of the world: Every generation has its learned men, every generation has its leaders! Up to now it was your duty to lead the people, but your time is up—Joshua's time for leadership has arrived."

And God took Moses up on the summit of the Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is over against Jericho. (This place had four names: Nebo, Aborim, Hor, and Pisgah). And pointing to the land afar off, God said:

"This is the land which I had promised by oath

to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to give their children. I am now showing it to you. You shall only see the land before you—but you shall not go thither!”

God thereupon showed Moses all the land of Israel, for He had bestowed upon Moses such strength of vision that he was able to see plainly all the land, for even the most distant place seemed close at hand.

Moreover God told Moses the entire history of the whole land: how glorious it would be and how it would be under the rule of strangers. He also revealed to Moses all that was to happen in the world till the Day of Judgment, when the resurrection of the dead will take place.

When Moses had finished looking upon the land and into the future, he was one hour nearer to death. And Moses said to himself: “All my life long I have had very unpleasant experiences with this people, I continuously rebuked them and admonished them to fear God and fulfil His commandments. But now, that I am about to depart from this mortal world, I wish to bless Israel.” Accordingly, Moses first wrote his Song of Praise to the Lord, and then he blessed all Israel.

His blessings completed, Moses asked the Israelites to forgive him for all the harshness he had shown toward them all through his leadership. He said to Israel:

"I have caused you much suffering with regard to the Law and its commandment. I have been too strict with you, but forgive me now, my people."

To which Israel replied:

"Our teacher, our Lord, it is forgiven! But forgive us our sins against you, too. For we have often kindled your anger, and laid great burdens upon you. Forgive us, our master!"

And Moses said again:

"I beg of you, when you shall have entered into the land of Israel remember me and say: 'Woe to the son of Amram! He ran before us like a horse, but his bones remained in the wilderness. . . .'"

Thereupon Israel said to Moses:

"Our master! What will become of us when you are gone?"

Moses answered:

"Do not think that God has wrought all the miracles for you, for my sake. They were done for your sake, and for His love and mercy. And if you have faith in Him, He will fulfil all your wishes. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. For how could you expect help from a man, flesh and blood, who cannot save himself from death? Put your trust in God, for He lives and exists eternally. In all your troubles turn to Him."

At that time there came a Bath-Kol from heaven and said:

"You have but one-half hour more to live!"

Moses, to whom God had shown the reward of the pious in the future world and the gates of salvation and of consolation that he would hereafter open to Israel exclaimed:

"Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like unto you—a people saved by the Lord?"

Thereupon Moses bade Israel farewell, saying:

"Dwell in peace. We shall meet again at the Resurrection!"

He went forth from them, weeping aloud. The Israelites, too, broke into lamentations, so that their weeping ascended to the highest heavens.

Moses took off his outer garment, rent his shirt, strewed dust upon his head, and like a mourner went to his tent lamenting:

"Woe to my feet that may not enter the land of Israel! Woe to my hands that may not pluck the fruit of the Holy Land! Woe to my palate that may not taste the fruits of the land that flows with milk and honey!"

The Holy One said to Gabriel:

"O Gabriel! Go and bring Me the soul of Moses."

But he replied:

"Lord of the Universe! How can I look upon

the death of him who is equal to the sixty myriads of Israel? How can I cause anguish to such a man?"

God then said to Michael:

"Go and bring Me the soul of Moses!"

But Michael replied:

"Lord of the Universe! I was his teacher and he was my pupil. I cannot look upon his death."

Whereupon God said to Sammaël the wicked:

"Go and bring Me the soul of Moses!"

He immediately clothed himself with wrath, girded on his sword, wrapped himself in cruelty, and went to meet Moses. When Sammaël perceived that Moses was sitting and writing the Ineffable Name, that the radiance of his countenance was like the sun; and that he resembled an angel of the Lord of Hosts, he was afraid of him, and said:

"It is true that the angels are not able to take the soul of Moses."

Before Sammaël appeared, Moses knew that he was coming. As soon as Sammaël saw Moses, trembling and pain took hold of him. Sammaël could not open his mouth, until Moses said to him:

"'There is no peace,' said the Lord, 'to the wicked.' What are you doing here?"

"I came to take your soul," he replied.

"Who sent you?"

"He that created all creatures," was Sammaël's reply.

Moses said:

"You shall not take my soul!"

"The souls of all that enter this world are delivered into my hands," insisted Sammaël.

"I am stronger than all who enter this world," said Moses.

"Wherein lies your strength," inquired Sammaël.

"I am Amram's son. . . . I was able to talk on the very day of my birth and I walked about and spoke to my father and mother. When I was three months old, I prophesied and said that I was destined to receive the Torah from the midst of flames of fire. While walking about the streets, I entered the king's palace and took off his crown from his head. When eighty years old, I performed signs and wonders in Egypt, and brought forth the sixty myriads of Israel in the sight of all the Egyptians; I divided the sea into twelve parts, and made the waters of Marah sweet. I ascended the heaven, where I walked about, and took part in the controversy of the angels; I received the Torah of fire, dwelt under the throne of fire, took shelter under a pillar of fire, and spoke face to face with God. I conquered the dwellers of heaven, and revealed their secrets to the sons of men. I received the Torah from the right hand of God,

blessed be He, and taught it to Israel. I waged war against Sihon and Og, the two mightiest men of the Gentiles, who were so tall that during the flood, the waters reached not their ankles. I made the sun and the moon stand still in the height of the universe, and smote these mighty men with the staff that was in my hand, and slew them. Who is there among them that enter this world who can do all this? Go away, wicked one, from here! You must not stand here. Go, flee from me. I will not give you my soul."

Sammaël forthwith returned and brought word back to God. But the Holy One said to him:

"Go, and bring the soul of Moses!"

He immediately drew his sword from its sheath, and stood near Moses. Whereupon Moses grew wroth, seized in his hand the staff, upon which was engraved the Ineffable Name, and fell upon him with the Ineffable Name, and taking a ray of splendor from between his eyes, he blinded Sammaël. Thus far Moses prevailed.

At the last moment a Bath-Kol, a heavenly voice, came forth and said:

"The hour of your death has come!"

Moses then said to the Holy One, blessed be He:

"O Lord of the Universe! Remember the day on which Thou didst reveal Thyself unto me in the thorn-bush and didst say unto me: 'Come, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring

forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.' Remember the time when I stood upon Mount Sinai, for forty days and forty nights. I implore Thee, deliver me not into the hand of the Angel of Death."

Whereupon the heavenly voice came forth and said unto him:

"Fear not! I Myself shall take charge of you and your burial."

At that moment Moses arose and sanctified himself, as do the Seraphim. The Holy One came down from the highest heaven of heavens, to take the soul of Moses, and with Him were three ministering angels, Michael, Gabriel and Zagzagel. Michael arranged Moses' bed, and Gabriel spread a garment of fine linen at his head, Zagzagel was at his feet. Michael stood on one side, and Gabriel at the other. The Holy One, blessed be He, then said to Moses:

"Cross your feet."

Moses did as bidden.

"Fold your hands and lay them upon your breast," came the command.

Moses did so.

"Close your eyes," said the voice gently.

Moses did so.

At that instant God summoned the soul from Moses' body and said unto her:

"My daughter, one hundred and twenty years

have I appointed for you to be in the body of Moses, but the time to depart has now come. Come forth, tarry not."

The soul, however, said to God:

"Lord of the Universe! I know that Thou art the God of all spirits, and that all the souls, the souls of the living and of the dead, are delivered into Thy hands, and that Thou didst create and fashion me, and put me in Moses' body for one hundred and twenty years. Now, is there in the world a body purer than that of Moses? Therefore, I love it, and desire not to depart from it."

But the Holy One said:

"O soul, come forth, tarry not. I shall bring you up to the highest heaven of heavens, and cause you to dwell beneath My Throne of Glory near the Cherubim, Seraphim, and hosts of other angels."

At this the Holy One, blessed be He, kissed Moses, and took away his soul with a kiss. . . . God wept, and cried, as it were.

And the Holy Spirit said:

"And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses."

The heavens wept and said:

"And the upright among men is no more."

When Joshua sought his master and found him not, he wept and said:

"Help, O Lord, for the godly man has ceased;

for faithfulness has failed from the children of men."

The ministering angels said:

"He executed the righteousness of the Lord."

Israel said:

"And his ordinances with Israel!"

All of them together said:

"He enters into peace, they rest in their beds, each one that walks in his uprightness."

The memory of the righteous is blessed, and his soul shall be in the life of the world to come.

CHAPTER XXX

"AND THE LORD SHOWED HIM ALL THE LAND"

It came to pass when God had commanded Moses saying: "Ascend Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho, and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die in the Mount whither you go up," that Moses did accordingly. And when he had approached Mount Nebo, he beheld that it had twelve steps, and as he was about to climb them, lo! his feet were standing on the summit of the mountain.

And it was then that the Eternal showed Moses the whole land.

* * * * *

Dawn.

The heavens in the East redden and take on a purple hue. Soon they clear up, patched only here and there with little snowy-white clouds that move slowly on and on. Calm zephyrs blow softly, bearing with them the aroma of gardens, orchards and best of spices. The fragrance of fields saturated with morning dew, and blessed by God, is spread all over, even the scent of the Lebanon and Carmel.

Moses inhales that celestial scent, and his eyes become opened; his spirits refresh; his soul revives; he straightens his body; his stature becoming like unto a palm tree, and he exclaims with delightfulness:

“What a wonderful land this is! Its very air is soul-reviving!”

Little villages, garden-cities whose fragrant scent is borne far and wide, spread themselves before the observing eyes of Moses. Brooks of fresh water are at the bottom of the mountain, and upon their calm waters geese and swans swim slowly and softly. Rays of the sun reflect in the waters, changing them to a hue of molten gold. . . . Fields covered from one end to the other with corn, are seen from a short distance. The full ears are swaying, and they seem like unto a sea whose waves move by the wind. . . . Waves of golden corn!

The vales are covered with verdure. Flocks of sheep graze hither and thither. The shepherds sleep contentedly near by . . . But, lo! one shepherd awakens, rises to his feet, and spreading his hands heavenward, blesses God. And, taking his pipe in his hand, he begins to play a tune, a tune praising the morning glory. All the other shepherds wake up, and join in the singing and playing. The melody echoes and re-echoes far and

wide, gradually dying away in the depths of the forest.

The sun comes out on the earth, and all living beings awaken. Men go forth to their toil in the fields, gardens and vineyards. What a marvelous sight! Men work joyously and happily; they toil and work with their hands, but their hearts and mouths offer prayers to God who blessed their soil.

Moses beholds these sights and is filled with innermost happiness, and with a joyful heart he utters to God:

"Happy is the people that is in such a case."

To which the Eternal replies:

"Yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

Multitudes of pilgrims march on. Boys and girls, men and women fill the roads. They come from all corners of the earth; from East, from West, from North and from South. They carry baskets in their hand, baskets filled with the best of fruit. The pilgrims sing and shout with joy. They sing and say:

"Let us go unto the House of the Lord."

They pass through cities, they lodge in the streets thereof, and at the rising of dawn a voice announces:

"Come, let us go to Zion, to the House of our Lord."

Zion, the House of the Lord! What magic lies in these words! How endeared are these words to the hearts of all the people who flock thereunto. And, as soon as these words are sung, everybody rises to his feet with happiness and joy, while turning his face eastward, toward Jerusalem.

Behold the pilgrims near the Holy City. There from a distance the temple is seen. The din of the city begins to be heard. A little while more and they are in Jerusalem. They again burst forth into song:

"We rejoice; our feet are standing within your gates, O, Jerusalem." And the inhabitants of Jerusalem go to meet the pilgrims, saying:

"Peace be upon you, our brethren from near and from far;

Blessed be your coming in;

Come, let us go to Zion, to the House of our Lord;

How lovely are your tabernacles, O Zion!"

Behold the High Priest; his appearance is like unto that of an angel of God; he is going towards the Mount of the Temple, accompanied by a great number of priests and Levites. To these are added

the elders and judges of the people. A great procession takes place, which heads towards the Temple. Now the procession halts. The High Priest turns his face towards the people, and blesses them with the following benediction:

"I pray Thee, O Lord, bless Thou Thy people and Thy inheritance. May the sceptre not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from the House of David. Grant, O Lord, long life and years of peace to Thy servants, the Cohanim, the Levites, and the Israelites, that they may worship Thee in this House, upon which Thy Name is called."

A thundering "Amen" responds to this benediction. . . .

The High Priest enters the House of God. How swiftly he performs the duties of this great day. No sooner does he utter the Holy Name, when all the people fall on their faces, saying, "Blessed be the name of His glorious Kingdom for ever and ever."

It is the most sacred of days, the Day of Atonement. The Lord forgives His people, and cleanses them from all their sins.

* * * * *

And, woe!

Behold a mighty people descends upon the land. A cruel, savage nation befalls the land of Israel.

A fire goes before him, and destruction in back of him. . . . The people swoop down like wild beasts that know no pity. . . . They kill, they mutilate, the plunder, they burn. . . .

Woe! Woe! The Temple is being consumed by the fire of the enemy. Shouts are heard: "Add fuel! Burn! Burn! Raze it! Raze it to the very foundation! And shouts of despair are mingled with these: "Water! Water! Let us save the House of God!"

Israel goes into captivity.

* * * * *

Moses shuddered at this vision and became greatly terrified and said to God:

"Wherefore is Thy wrath enkindled against Thy people?"

And the Almighty replied:

"A city of faithfulness became unfaithful; the people judge not the fatherless. They became like Sodom, like Amōrah. Injustices took the place of justice. Instead of righteousness there is violence. And God chastised those that turned astray from Him, and He would cleanse them in the crucible of affliction until all their dross and alloy be removed, and they become like pure gold. . . . Zion will be redeemed with justice, and those that return to her,—with righteousness."

